LONG LIVE VINYL

ISSUE 32
NOVEMBER 2019
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BIG THIEF

"THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING"

ELBOW

"IT'S ALL BREXIT, DEATH AND BEWILDERMENT"

ISLAND RECORDS

THE FAMOUS PALM TREE LABEL TURNS 60

VINYL WHISTLE

THE RECORD SHOP RUN BY A PREMIER LEAGUE REF

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THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO COLLECTING JOHN, PAUL, GEORGE & RINGO

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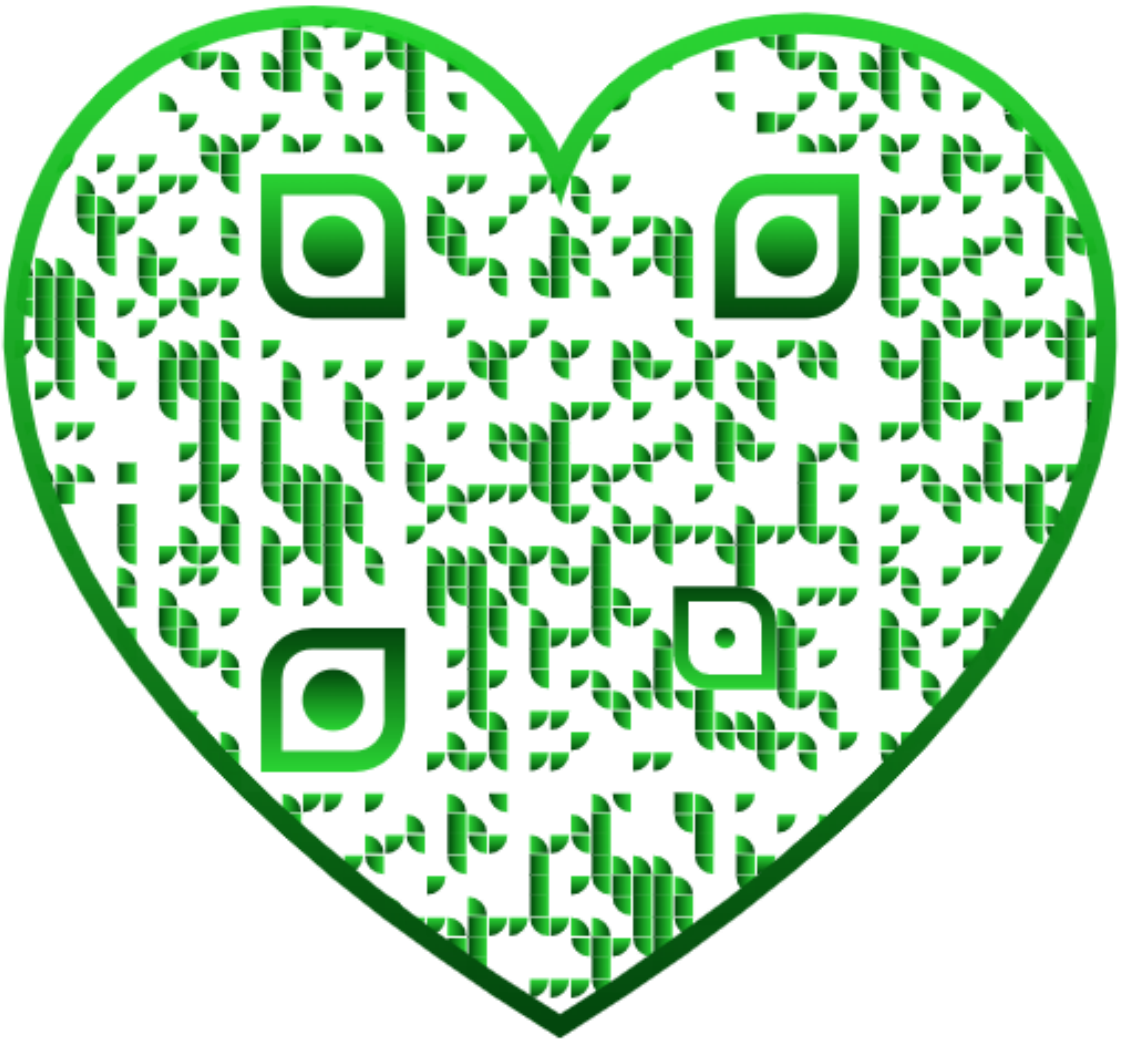

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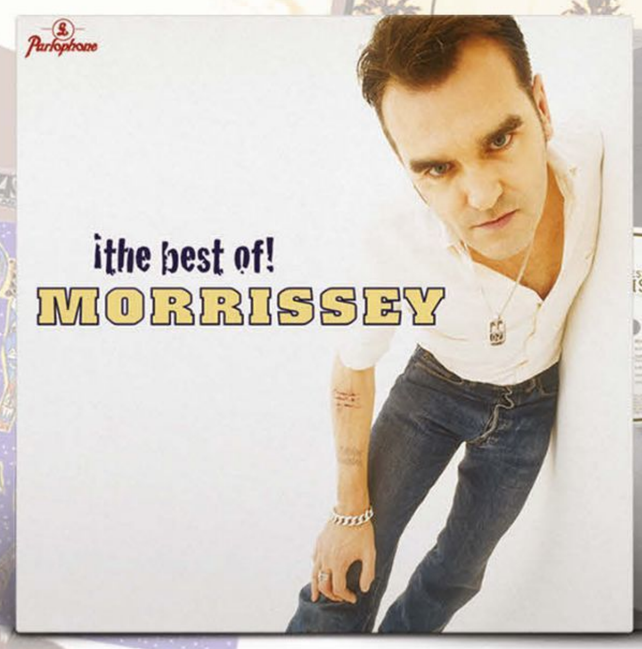

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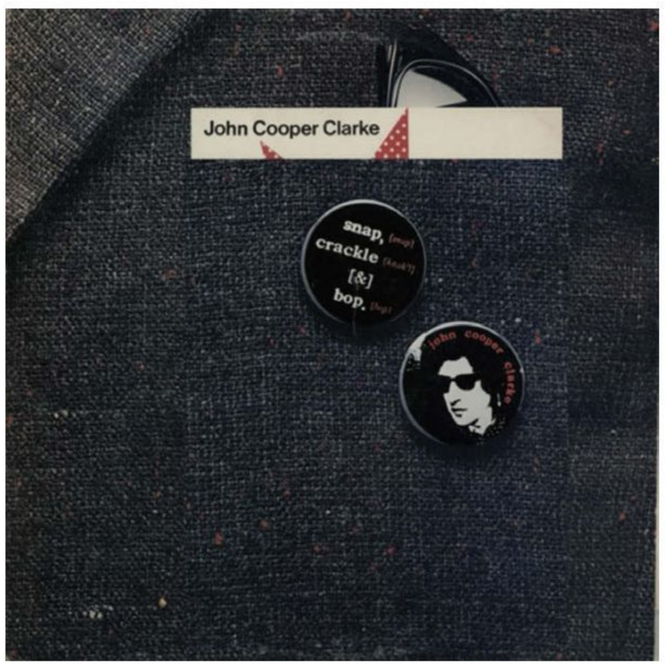
Welcome...

Ever feel as if there aren't enough hours in the day to get your job done? Well spare a thought for Michael Howe. Prince's estate manager and guardian of his huge Paisley Park vault has enough work to keep him busy for the rest of his life. After the Prince estate had drilled into the vault following the Purple genius' death in 2016, filmmaker Mobeen Azhar claimed there was enough previously unheard music within to release an album every year for the next 100 years. By our rudimentary maths, that's 100 more Prince albums – the man held an ambition throughout his life to write a new song every day, often succeeding. The vast 10LP *1999* boxset we delve into this issue, with the help of many of Prince's former friends and bandmates, is merely the tip of the iceberg. With the mind-bending scale of unreleased music now clear, a second volume of this year's excellent *Originals* is on the cards, while the tantalising prospect of *Purple Rain* being given the deluxe treatment could well become reality. There's a lot of scepticism about the vinyl reissue market, but the Prince project is perhaps the best example of why it's so important, unveiling great tranches of music that fans never got to hear and helping us try to understand Prince's outrageous productivity. We can't wait to hear what's next. Elsewhere this month, I was privileged to spend some time with one of the best new bands on the planet today, Big Thief. You can read about their second new album of 2019 and why this is just the beginning for Adrianne Lenker and the boys on p36. We also speak to Guy Garvey about the darkness that inspired the new Elbow album, meet Adam Green, Jason Isbell and Mark Lanegan, visit the record shop run by a Premier League ref and bring you the story of Island Records – the palm tree label celebrating its 60th birthday. Finally, we were desperately sad to hear of the passing of Daniel Johnston, another tortured genius who left us too soon after suffering a heart attack. 10p from your purchase of this magazine goes to our nominated local mental health charity – Mind Bath. Take care and happy reading.

Gary Walker *Editor*

LONGLIVEVINYL

ALLEN BEAULIEU / MICHAEL BUISHAS



LONG LIVE VINYL

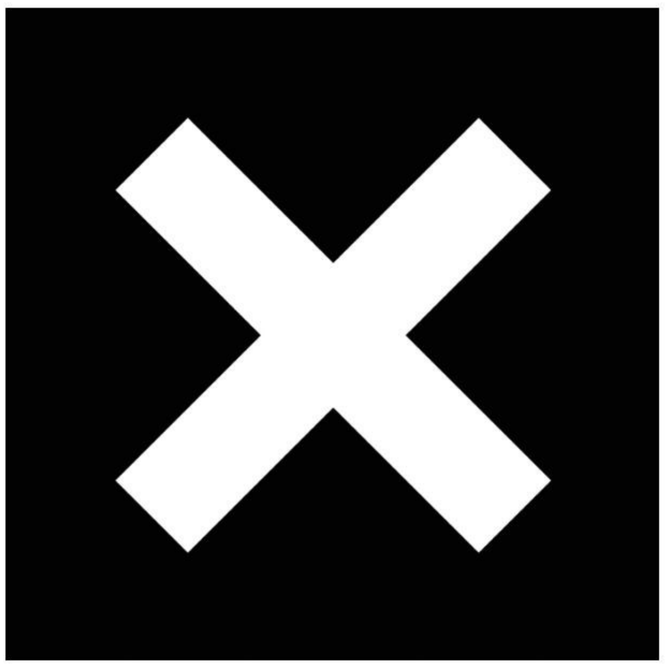
SUBS OFFER

SAVE MONEY

WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE!
TURN TO PAGE 8

COVER STORY

PRINCE 1999 52
The inside story behind the new 10LP boxset of his Purple Majesty's fifth album



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MARTYN GOODACRE/GETTY

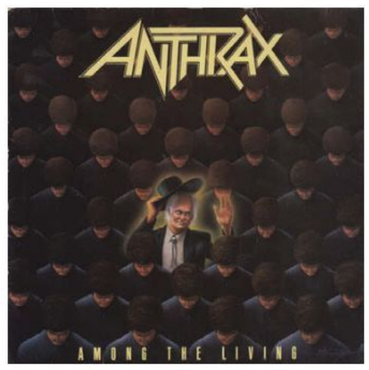
LONG LIVE VINYL

The *Long Live Vinyl* team's favourite Island Records albums

GARY WALKER
Different Class
Pulp

GARY TIPP
Fear
John Cale

TILDA HOWARD
Hot Fuss
The Killers



ANDY McGREGOR
Among The Living
Anthrax

IAN PEEL
Slave To The Rhythm
Grace Jones

Meet our expert contributors…

SIMON RAYMONDE
Simon was the bassist and keyboard player in the Cocteau Twins; he's currently in Lost Horizons. He launched the independent label Bella Union in 1997. His label has been home to bands including Fleet Foxes, The Flaming Lips, Midlake, Father John Misty, John Grant, Explosions In The Sky and Lanterns On The Lake. He's also produced many great albums.

JOHN EARLS
In addition to writing about music for *Classic Pop*, *NME* and *The Daily Star*, John Earls was editor of Teletext's Planet Sound for a decade. He also writes about football, spends too much time on Twitter and is delighted that his new hometown in Bedfordshire has a decent record shop. There's even a bus that goes to Luton Town's ground, so his life is essentially sorted.

GARETH MURPHY
London-born but Dublin raised, Gareth Murphy's childhood was enlivened by his father's work in the 1970s and 80s as a concert promoter. Now based in Paris, he has produced numerous compilations and is the author of *Cowboys And Indies – The Epic History Of The Record Industry*. He's just completed Seymour Stein's memoirs, *Siren Song*, which will be released this year.

DANIEL DYLAN WRAY
Daniel is a freelance music writer based in Sheffield. He writes for *The Guardian*, *VICE*, *Pitchfork*, *Uncut*, *The Quietus*, *Noisey* and several others. He will be forever poor because he spends too much money on records. He can be found playing said records in Sheffield, often making small children cry by playing Einstürzende Neubauten on a Sunday afternoon in a pub.

PETE PAPHIDES
Pete bought his first record at the age of nine and has been a vinyl obsessive ever since, while writing for *Melody Maker*, *Q*, *Mojo*, *Time Out*, *The Times* and *The Guardian*. He is one of the UK's best known music journalists and has also written and presented documentaries for BBC Radio 4 and BBC 6 Music. You can catch him on Soho Radio every Tuesday, 12-2pm.

Anthem Publishing
Piccadilly House,
London Road, Bath BA1 6PL
Tel **+44 (0) 1225 489 984**

Editor **Gary Walker**
gary.walker@anthem-publishing.com

Creative Director **Jenny Cook**
jenny.cook@anthem-publishing.com

Art Editor **Andrew McGregor**
andy.mcgregor@anthem-publishing.com

Founder & Editor At Large **Ian Peel**
ian.peel@anthem-publishing.com

Production Editor **Gary Tipp**

Digital Assistant **Tilda Howard**

Contributors
Huw Baines, Chris Barrett, Glen Bushell, Garth Cartwright, Gordon Coates, John Earls, Steve Harnell, Gareth Murphy, Mark O'Shaughnessy, Pete Paphides, Chris Parkin, John Pickford, Simon Raymonde, Paul Rigby, Felix Rowe, Teri Saccone, Gary Tipp, Wyndham Wallace, Ben Wardle, Daniel Dylan Wray, Jonathan Wright

ADVERTISING
Advertising **Chris Cope, Sean Leslie**
chris.cope@anthem-publishing.com
sean.leslie@anthem-publishing.com

ANTHEM PUBLISHING
Managing Director **Simon Lewis**
simon.lewis@anthem-publishing.com
CEO **Jon Bickley**
jon.bickley@anthem-publishing.com
Head Of Marketing & Production
Verity Travers
verity.travers@anthem-publishing.com

LICENSING
Regina Erak *regina.erak@globalworks.co.uk*

PRINT & PRODUCTION
Print **William Gibbons & Sons Ltd**
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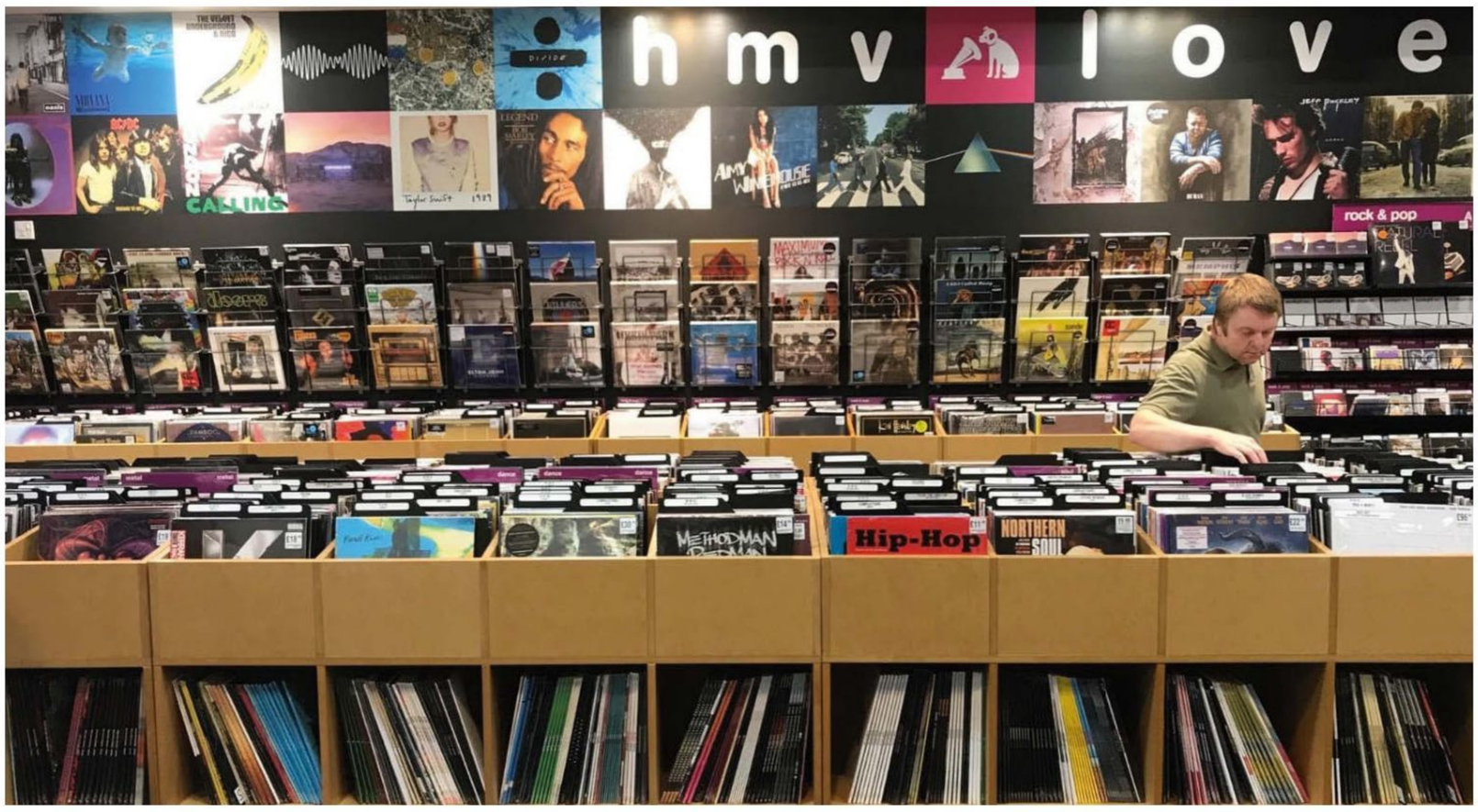
On the record

Roll Out The Vinyl

Retailer HMV has announced ambitious plans to bring a whole lotta vinyl back onto the high street



More choice, when it comes to purchasing vinyl, has always got to be a good thing. And according to HMV's Head Of Music, John Hirst, that's just what is in store at the venerable retailer after major expansion plans have seen a significant jump in the number of albums made available.

What is the story behind your expansion plans?
"Our new owner Doug Putman took over in February and was very keen that we expand our vinyl offering straightaway. He believes that the vinyl boom isn't a bubble. This time last year, the average number of albums in an HMV store was in the region of 700/800, now it's more like 3,000/4,000. There's 65 stores with 2,000 titles, another 30 with 4,000 and another 20 with 6,000. That's a big chunky range."

How is the expansion going? And what will we see that's different?
"Our rollout is complete, every store now have their new units in. To be honest, our old units weren't the best. The first thing to do was design some new units and we've gone for traditional record shop units rather than big lumbering metal racks that have typified HMV for the past 15 years or so. The decision was also made to move the vinyl offering to more prominent areas of the store, where in recent years it has been tucked away at the back."

What are the benefits to record buyers?
"What we've done is made sure that, for example, instead of all having a few Bob Dylan albums, we now have every Bob Dylan album, and the same goes for all major heritage artists. Saying that, we also worked with all our suppliers, including the independent labels, to make sure we've got plenty of new music and a classic catalogue of important indie artists. It's important the independent labels come with us on this."

What do you feel is your point of difference from independent record shops?
"Smaller shops don't have the room or inclination for 10 Bob Dylan albums. The only place for that until now has been online. We can offer the browsing experience the record buyer truly loves with bulging racks of vinyl. Smaller shops aren't in the position to stock the full range of titles that we can. Hopefully, browsing in the new environment will become more of a social occasion. If we can bring the social aspect of browsing back to the high street, then that's a fantastic result."

Discogs TRENDING CHART

THE TOP 10 TRENDING VINYL RELEASES FROM THE DISCOGS COMMUNITY THIS MONTH

10 *This Is Not A Safe Place*
Ride

9 *The Rescue*
Explosions In The Sky

8 *We Are Not Your Kind*
Slipknot

7 *How Strange, Innocence*
Explosions In The Sky

6 *Definitely Maybe*
Oasis

5 *Hud Dreams*
Knxwledge

4 *i,i*
Bon Iver

3 *The Center Won't Hold*
Sleater-Kinney

2 *Go For Your Guns*
The Isley Brothers

1 *Infest The Rats' Nest*
King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard

Official Vinyl Albums Chart

SEPTEMBER 2019

10 *Lungs*
Florence & The Machine

9 *i, i*
Bon Iver

8 *The SLP*
SLP

7 *Tallulah*
Feeder

6 *No Man's Land*
Frank Turner

5 *This Is Not A Safe Place*
Ride

4 *When I Have Fears*
The Murder Capital

3 *We Are Not Your Kind*
Slipknot

2 *Norman F**king Rockwell*
Lana Del Rey

1 *Definitely Maybe*
Oasis

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Various

www.ukposterart.com

The UK Poster Association is an umbrella group set up to help support the nation's poster artists. On their site, you'll find links to a huge range of screen printed gig posters designed by a multitude of different artists – all available to buy. Also check the site for details of their live events, including exhibitions and festival dates.

LISTEN UP PODCAST

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Bored of the Gallagher brothers' squabbles? Celebrating the 25th anniversary of *Definitely Maybe* (see our Issue 30 cover feature), Listen Up recalls the days when Oasis were briefly about the music. The series tells the story of their debut album with contributions from fans and fellow musicians.

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At least two of the team on *Long Live Vinyl* have got LP5 turntables, and with good reason. AT has now launched an update, with improvements including an upgraded cartridge, external power supply and metallic gimbal suspension system.

The Selecter

Long Live Vinyl's essential picks for the month ahead

BEAK T-SHIRT

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www.invada.co.uk

Summer may be over, but you can still cut a dash in this rather on point T-shirt from Bristol experimentalists BEAK>. It's available exclusively through Invada Records, designed by Jerome Bizien and printed in the West Country.

LONDON MUSIC MANIA

£5

www.vip-24.com

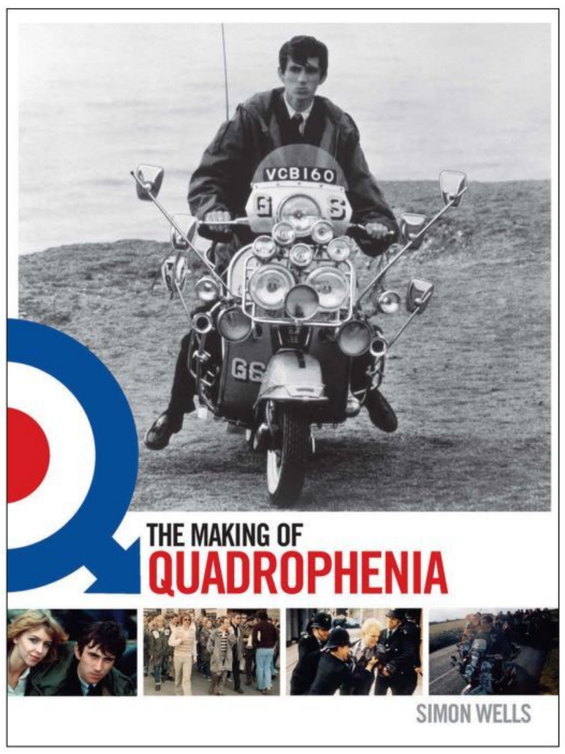
It's not long until the world's biggest record fair in Utrecht, the Netherlands, but first on the calendar is the UK's No 1 show at Harrow's Byron Hall. In a spacious new venue for this year, it features dealers from all over the world. The doors open at 11am Saturday and 10am Sunday. Tickets are just £5, with premium early bird admission available from 9am costing £20.

THE MAKING OF QUADROPHENIA

£14

www.omnibuspress.com

Released to coincide with the classic 1979 mod movie's 40th anniversary, Simon Wells' book is a definitive account that includes many never-before published images. A Deluxe edition limited to 500 copies has an illustrated map of the film's Brighton locations, a reproduction of a Japanese brochure, postcards and a certificate of authenticity.



Work In Progress

ISOBEL CAMPBELL

THERE IS NO OTHER

COOKING VINYL 31 JANUARY

My new album is... *There Is No Other.*

The sessions... began VERY loosely and prematurely at Dreamland Recording Studios in Hurley NY with my engineer friend Matthew Cullen. We cut the live takes of *City Of Angels*, *Runnin Down A Dream* and *Boulevard* in the main Church room with Jim McCulloch and Dave McGowan. We all thought that place was haunted… Everything else was recorded and mixed by Chris Szczech. We kicked off casually at Mant Studios in Eagle Rock and at our house in Altadena, CA. Then when the summer swelter hit, we escaped cross country with our dogs to Skaneatles Lake and spent the summer writing and tinkering with our portable Pro Tools rig in a tiny cabin in the woods. Come autumn, back to Altadena. Come February, an insurance office on West Genesee St in Syracuse, NY. It was so snowy and cold, a shock to the system. I kept myself going by thinking about Lou Reed. I don't know why, but that always keeps me going. He studied creative writing at Syracuse University. I guess I had to put romance into the situation somehow, thinking 'Hmm… Lou must've froze his bum off like me'. Lastly, the home run and most focused, deep time was in a cabin in the Catskills. I think we focused better without interruptions, and finally completed tracking and editing. Elijah Thomson played bass and Nina Violet played and arranged clarinet and strings. All songs were mixed in Woodstock, too.

***There Is No Other* is Isobel Campbell's first solo studio album since *Milkwhite Sheets* in 2006**

I worked with... Chris Szczech. 99.9% of the time it was the two of us. Chris played practically all the guitars and lots of other stuff. We co-wrote seven of the songs. We drove to Rochester to pick up a vintage Avocado Burst Ludwig Standard kit and took turns to play it. Usually, I self-produce all my records, Chris is the only person in the world I would want and trust to co-produce with me.

I used... innate senses, instinct and patience to write and arrange the songs. It took me a while to know what I was doing and to even know if I would get there. I felt my way. I didn't want to rush at all. I devoted myself to creating this.

We were inspired... by the nature of Southern California and Upstate New York. I'm happiest wandering about with the dogs, singing. I feel peaceful and connected when I'm out in nature. Half of the songs on this album came to me in Eaton Canyon. The other half in the Unique Forest of Central New York. They have these amazing old sugar maples there. And fireflies.

We learnt... don't ever move 3,000 miles and live with family whilst house hunting and making a record! I've always suspected that would be a nightmare, and it was! That being said, every album I've ever produced has been unpredictable in nature. I get blindsided and blessed in equal measure every time.

Playing these songs live... will be an adventure in 2020. With the initial US label folding and the ensuing legal quagmire, it took over three years to get to this point. That fact is not lost on me. I'm really looking forward to rehearsals and beyond psyched to play the album live. Everything is aligning finally at the right time.

You'd be surprised to know that... when I first went to Alex Wharton at Abbey Road to master the record, *Hey World* was not on the record. It was one of five extra tracks. When Rob Collins at Cooking Vinyl heard them, he asked if I'd consider putting *Hey World* on the album. I told him I would if I could find the right place for it. I'm glad he asked.

Lost Shops

#5 CODA MUSIC

Anyone who ever visited Edinburgh likely got a glimpse of Coda Music as it sat at 12 Bank Street, right on the main road as it swung around to approach the castle at the top of The Mound. Coda Music was a specialist folk shop – selling all kinds of British and Irish folk music, plus jazz, blues, Cajun, New Orleans (I once found a CD by a Mardi Gras Indian troupe I'd never seen outside of the Big Easy!) and all manner of world music. Established in 1990, Coda rode the CD boom then, when sales shrank and vinyl returned, they ensured they stocked as much vinyl as possible. The shop was founded by Dougie Anderson and Rose Norton, who met working for Virgin's Scottish shops: Dougie started out working in Bruce's Records (a small Scottish chain) then shifted to Virgin, while Rose started in a Portsmouth record shop then shifted to Scotland to work for Virgin. Together, they set up three mainstream Coda Records shops and, separately, the folk shop. The mainstream shops were crushed by supermarkets discounting chart CDs, but the folk shop thrived. Billed as "Scotland's premier folk & Celtic music shop", Coda catered to Edinburgh's thriving folk scene, while the university also provided plenty of custom. Last year, the owners decided that they wanted to retire and travel. Thus, in mid-January 2019, Coda Music shut for the final time.

Garth Cartwright

ASHLEY OSBORNE

Simon says

SIMON RAYMONDE

In a not-so-distant dystopian future, Bella Union founder Simon reveals a world where music has been driven underground and small-batch vinyl is pressed in a bunker on the undercliff path in Saltdean

November 2029. A message in a bottle from the future. It's winter time already but being out of Europe for the last 10 years has been catastrophic for the music business in England and somehow even after the Big Freeze of 2020 saw the country grind to a halt, it feels even bleaker and colder than normal.

Since the collapse of the now-defunct Conservative Party following Boris Johnson's disastrous 55-day tenure as Prime Minister back in 2019 splintered the party into so many fractions that it simply imploded, the ENP (English Nationalists) became the ruling party, and not to put too fine a point on it things have been pretty grim.

Having Rees-Mogg in charge is bad enough, but with Nigel Farage, who deserted the Brexit Party as quickly as he founded it, as his Commander-in-Chief it is hard to have much hope. With English bands unable to tour in Europe, Ireland or America since the UK left the European Union during the shutdown of 2020, any kind of music exports have sadly become a thing of the past.

A 'friend' was caught trying to smuggle a box of assorted Motown singles into Hamburg last month and hasn't been seen or heard since. That was before the full travel ban they implemented this week. We went underground and have been pressing short runs of vinyl in a bunker on the undercliff path in Saltdean. (FYI, we will exchange 1x single vinyl LP for 3x energy tokens and a double gatefold coloured vinyl LP for 5x energy tokens or 10x tins of Linda McCartney's Veggie Spam).

Martial law is a recent attempt to restore order, but to be honest things have been getting worse for a while since the ENP decreed that all music that doesn't glorify the Party be banned. I was telling my grandson about the days when you could go and see a live band at night at assorted venues in the city you lived in, to which he snorted – I guess we will just have to get used to the 6pm curfews.

The last time we had a band play outside the UK was when Forest Fires played Eurosonic back in January 2020 – and look what happened to them! They remain in Holland to this day. Some talk within the Resist movement compares England to how North Korea was in the early part of the 21st Century, but with no flights in or out of the country since 2025, it really does feel worse. I remember when the biggest worry was bands having to fill out a Carnet every time they played a show in Europe. We can only dream for that to be the worst problem we would face now.

When we visited Bandung in Indonesia back pre-ENP, we met leaders of the underground music scene, who unwittingly gave us true inspiration that we can survive the oppression and at the very least document for future generations the bands that now exist in secret around the country, to make sure that their defiance and their bravery is heralded. Bands like Fajita Demigogues from Wigan, Dudley's Rebecca Riots, Louche Women from Bristol, Die Fibrilators from Liverpool, Brighton's Tortilla The Hun, and Piss Factory from the Left Bank of London's Lower East District 4, to name but a few.

A friend was caught trying to smuggle a box of Motown singles into Hamburg

Events obviously can't be posted online or promoted like we did back in the first two decades of the century, so for those of us lucky enough to live on the coast many of us have been living and working in the labyrinth of subterranean tunnels and having live music every night four hours after curfew.

For those inland, I am sure there are other networks, but we don't hear about some things for months. Dudley Canal Tunnel under Castle Hill was where I saw Rebecca Riots for the first time in 2027 and it is still a dream of ours to release a limited edition of 50 copies of that live show on vinyl. I had recorded it on one of those felt pens with a voice recorder inside and it actually sounds pristine.

There is also a Die Fibrilators gig happening soon at the River Caves – once a spectacular subterranean water ride that ran beneath Blackpool Pleasure Beach, it opened in 1902 but was shutdown by the ENP when they had a crackdown on any activity or product promoted by any words suggesting 'joy'. We are definitely going to try to make it up to Blackpool for that. And Bella Union is hoping to promote Piss Factory at the Ripley Tunnel in Greenwich in December this year. It is one of our favoured 'hidden venues', originally designed by Thomas Ripley for the use of naval veterans and curiously has a bowling alley, which is where we tend to put the stage. Hopefully, other historians of the Underground will report on this event one day, as I fear this will be my last missive.

For those reading, despite the bleak times we live in, music elevates us and we must protect it at all costs. We don't support music. It supports us.

The Big Question

Addressing Vinyl's Most Pressing Issues

Is vinyl a sound investment?

While the majority of vinyl buyers are happy to splash the cash simply to add to our collections, there are some who are in it for the money

Anybody who has checked the crazy prices of the carelessly stickered vinyl in the UK's charity shops recently might be suckered into thinking that they are sitting on an absolute goldmine at home. Sadly, on closer inspection it's not the vinyl that has wildly appreciated, but rather the wide-eyed, uninformed optimism of the local chazza employee hiking up the value to a ludicrous degree. Twitter site Vinyl Stupidity (@VinylStupidity) revels in these listings and among its recent posts has documented a copy of the *Saturday Night Fever* OST going for £70 in a charity shop in Teddington, as well as a Beastie Boys interview picture disc valued at £50 (Discogs price, £8). Nice work if you can get it.

That's not to say the price of second-hand vinyl isn't going up, far from it, with prices at the top end of the market showing a healthy upward trend. And while it's not in the same alternative asset class as, say, fine art or vintage wine, the returns from putting your money into black gold are on the up. For instance, a first press of Led Zeppelin's debut (turquoise sleeve lettering) as far back as 10 years ago would have been priced at around the £500 mark, five years ago it was in the region of £800/£1,200 and it's now pushing through the £1,500 barrier.

These figures were given to *Long Live Vinyl* by Paul Fairweather, auctioneer at Omega Auctions, a company who can list a lot of serious vinyl investors among their clients. "Generally speaking, they are first and foremost music fans who see collecting as a way to invest in something they are passionate about. The value of certain records has continued to increase over the years. Although it is not an exact science, if you are putting your money into buying the right records, then a fair annual return might be 5%, with many items having doubled in value over a 10-year period."

Which clearly begs the question, 'what are the right records?' And are there certain artists and genres that lend themselves more readily to the pursuit of a buck? Paul advises, "Classic rock from heritage artists the likes of The Beatles, the Stones, Led Zeppelin and Jimi Hendrix are always a safe bet. More specific genres such as punk and indie have seen significant growth in value over recent years, as people with disposable incomes look to build collections from their youth.

Punk, in particular, seems to have struck a chord with investors. In the 90s, a Sex Pistols *God Save The Queen* on A&M was changing hands for between £2,000 and £4,000 depending on its condition. Now, the value is typically in the region of £12,000.

Paul comments on other genres that currently hold sway in investment circles. "Reggae remains a strong market, especially if in excellent condition. While the demand for soul remains strong, as does indie from the 80s through to the 90s."

But just as those ads for financial products always state, the prices can go down as well as up, and vinyl is far from being a sure-fire money earner. Paul takes up the story: "Prog rock seems to have slowed up and maybe even plateaued. While the market for vintage rock 'n' roll has dropped in value."

Before letting him go and digging into our own pocket, we asked Paul for one final bit of advice: "When buying any vinyl as an investment, condition and pressings are the key determinants of value. If you can find a first press in near-Mint condition, then that's not a bad starting point."

Get your hands on a copy of an early Led Zeppelin first press and you too will soon be flying exclusively by private jet

HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY

The Completist

PETE PAPHIDES

In a case of like mother, like son, Pete's 79-year-old mum has begun to scour her local charity shops in search of rare vinyl

My mother is not to blame at all. Faced with all the evidence before her, she was entirely right to conclude that records would be the ruin of me. By the end of 1985, I'd managed to fail almost all my O-levels. Despite my protestations, it turned out it really is hard to retain information about the industrial revolution, quadratic equations and *Romeo And Juliet* while repeatedly listening to *Primitive Painters* by Felt.

Further vindication for my mum came when it transpired that Julian Cope's *Fried* LP really is a highly unsatisfactory learning aid for any student seeking to nail the basic principles of the French subjunctive. My mum observed my academic deterioration in the years after I started buying records and came to the understandable conclusion that records had been sent by satan to deprive The Three Most Noble Professions In The Eyes Of All Greek Parents (doctor, lawyer, accountant) of one of their most promising talents. And yet, thanks to a freakish succession of serendipitous opportunities, something happened that surprised both of us. I ended up making a living writing about the very thing that she thought would destroy me.

And my mum? All these years later, she's keen to show that she's mellowed considerably. All the inter-generational battles have been fought and no-one died. In 2019, it's blowing her Greek-mum brain that: (a) I'm still buying records; and (b) everyone else seems to be buying them again, too. She listened to a Radio 4 documentary I hosted in which I told the story of Vashti Bunyan's unlikely rise to cult adoration – a rise reflected in the value of her 1970 album *Just Another Diamond Day*, which now changes hands for upwards of £1,000.

The idea that any record can be worth that much has planted a seed in her. Now retired, she trawls her local charity shops and makes it her business to tell me if she thinks she's happened upon a record she thinks I'd like. Sometimes it feels like a continuing act of rapprochement for all those tense teenage exchanges, but I don't feel like I can ever really ask her.

And besides, I don't want to spoil her fun by telling her that panning for black gold isn't as easy as it looks. I can follow her logic. She's seen my record room and all the smelly old albums with groovy 60s and 70s writing wedged onto my shelves look the same as the ones she sees going for 50p in the Sue Ryder shop. Sometimes she texts me photos of them with the accompanying caption, "Look! Is this rear?!" [sic] To the untrained eye, the cover of Freddie "Parrot Face" Davies' *A Day In The Life Of Samuel Tweet* (average Discogs price: £1.70) does look much the same as the original soundtrack of *Here We Go Round The Mulberry Bush* (Discogs price: £35). My mum's belated attempt to join in the hunt for "rear" records is unbelievably sweet. An attempt to join in with a game whose rules are impossible to explain to a 79-year-old Greek woman.

"I read somewhere that the most expensive record of all time is by The Beatles," she texted me recently. "There are Beatles records here," she replied. "Shall I get you one?"

"Which one is it?"

Seconds later, my phone vibrated. I was looking at *Lennon & McCartney Tijuana Style – Music Made Famous By The Beatles Excitingly Recreated To The Sound Of Brass*. Currently there are 138 of these babies for sale on Discogs, starting at 25p. Like so many releases on EMI's budget MFP imprint, it started cheap and has merely got cheaper.

Currently there are 138 of these babies for sale on Discogs, starting at 25p

Pete Paphides is a music journalist, record collector and broadcaster. Catch him on Soho Radio every Tuesday, 12-2pm

"Sorry mum! Keep looking!"

The more humane answer in some ways might have been to just say, "Look, the chances of you finding a sweet £1,000 Vashti-grade rarity are virtually non-existent. But, of course, my mum and her generation have been ushered into their dotage on a TV diet of *Cash In The Attic*, *Bargain Hunt* and, of course, *Antiques Roadshow*. And given that her generation all came of age during the first wave of rock 'n' roll, perhaps this is the optimal time to launch an *Antiques Roadshow* devoted entirely to vinyl. Instead of having experts on hand to offer valuations on items that fall within their area of specialised knowledge, 'The Antiques Rockshow' would pitch up at a record fair with specialists in their chosen genre to spin out an interesting backstory to an old rocksteady seven-inch by Millie or a Wings test pressing.

And, of course, if 'The Antiques Rockshow' is ever commissioned, it might help give my mum a steer in her current bin-browsing proclivities. The irony is that, throughout all this time, it hasn't occurred to her that some of her greatest finds have been sitting in her own house for the past five decades. Earlier this year, I singled out a tasty-looking album by the late Cretan folk hero Nikos Xylouris. "Did you know this is currently going for around £500?"

"Really? That old thing? His later stuff is much better. You can have it if you want."

I tell her I couldn't possibly do that. I will, however, erm, look after it if she wants me to.

"It's probably for the best," she says. "We never even play it. Your father prefers his more popular stuff and, well… as you know, I only listen to tapes."

Station To Station

Classic LPs take a whistle stop tour of the UK's railway stations as part of National Album Day

National Album Day returns for its second edition this month, with an exhibition of classic album artwork on display at major train stations all over the country. The Sounds Of… show has called in at Glasgow Central and Manchester Piccadilly, with Birmingham New Street and London Bridge still to come. Record shops from the UK's regions have selected their key albums.

Scotland, Love Music: The Skids, *Days In Europa*; Primal Scream, *Screamadelica*; The Jesus And Mary Chain, *Psychocandy*; Frightened Rabbit, *The Midnight Organ Fight*; Gerry Rafferty, *City To City*.

North, Piccadilly Records: The Beatles, *Revolver*; LFO, *Frequencies*; Pulp, *Different Class*; Everything But The Girl, *Love Not Money*; Children Of Zeus, *Travel Light*; Jane Weaver, *The Silver Globe*.

Midlands, The Diskery: Electric Light Orchestra, *Out Of The Blue*; Duran Duran, *Duran Duran*; The Streets, *Original Pirate Material*; Steel Pulse, *Handsworth Revolution*; Black Sabbath, *Black Sabbath*; Joan Armatrading, *Joan Armatrading*.

London & South, Resident: Portishead, *Dummy;* Sons Of Kemet, *Your Queen Is A Reptile;* The Maccabees, *Marks To Prove It*; The Kinks, *The Kinks Are The Village Green Preservation Society;* Blur, *Modern Life Is Rubbish*. The Cure, *Seventeen Seconds*.

$224m

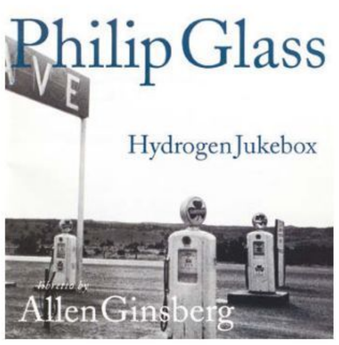
The amount generated from sales of vinyl in the US in the first half of 2019, with figures soon expected to overtake those for CDs for the first time since 1986. CDs sold $247 million in the same period.

TOP OF THE SHOPS

Long Live Vinyl is again searching for the nation's favourite record shop. Last year, more than 8,000 of you voted for our Record Shop Of The Year, with Sound It Out Records taking the crown. You can vote at www.bit.ly/rsoty19 and there are £150 of record tokens, Record Store Day tote bags and copies of Graham Jones' *The Vinyl Revival* book to be won.

4 OF A KIND… Elemental Gases

ARCADE FIRE
NEON BIBLE
The second album from the Canadian indie rockers was a grandiose affair that combined the good book with a colourless, inert monatomic gas.



PHILIP GLASS
HYDROGEN JUKEBOX
With its title lifted from a line from Ginsberg's *Howl*, Philip Glass's opera incorporates the world's most abundant chemical substance.

HAWKWIND
THE XENON CODEX
The 15th studio album from the veteran space rockers took time out to reference the dense, odourless gas with the atomic number 54.

JEAN MICHEL JARRE
OXYGENE
The breakthrough album of the French keyboard wizard's orchestrated electronica was dedicated to the thing that makes our lives possible.

Coming Soon…

OUR PICK OF THE NEW VINYL RELEASES

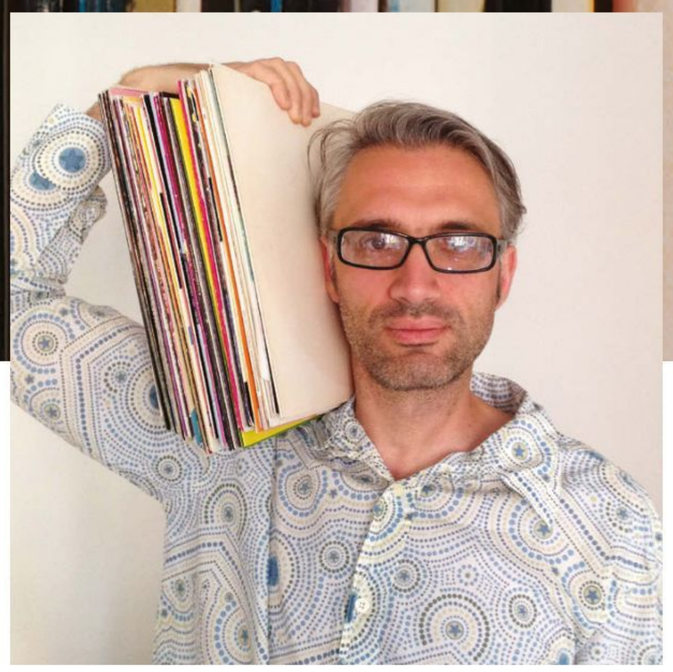
18 OCTOBER Alter Bridge, *Walk The Sky* (Napalm Records); Battles, *Juice B Crypts* (Warp); Floating Points, *Crush* (Ninja Tune); Foals, *Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost Part 2* (Warner); Jim James, *The Order Of Nature* (Decca Gold); Mark Lanegan Band, *Somebody's Knocking* (Heavenly); Nils Frahm, *All Encores* (Erased Tapes); Patrick Watson, *Wave* (Domino); Third Eye Blind, *Screamer* (Mega Collider)

25 OCTOBER Anna Meredith, *FIBS* (Moshi Moshi); Cigarettes After Sex, *Cry* (Partisan); Michael Kiwanuka, *KIWANUKA* (Interscope); Neil Young & Crazy Horse, *Colorado* (Reprise); Sun O))), *Pyroclasts* (Southern Lord); Robbie Robertson, *Sinematic* (Universal); Underworld, *Drift Songs* (Smith Hyde Productions); Stereophonics, *Kind* (Parlophone); Lankum, *The Livelong Day* (Rough Trade); Swans, *Leaving Meaning* (Young God)

1 NOVEMBER Sudan Archives, *Athena* (Stones Throw Records); Jeffrey Lewis, *Bad Wiring* (Moshi Moshi)

8 NOVEMBER Girl Ray, *Girl* (Moshi Moshi); Kele, *2042* (KOLA); Soundwalk Collective With Patti Smith, *Mummer Love* (Bella Union); Xylouris White, *The Sisypheans* (Drag City)

15 NOVEMBER Tindersticks, *No Treasure But Hope* (City Slang); Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac, *Before The Beginning* (CMG); Vetiver, *Up On High* (Loose Music)



IAN PEEL'S
LINER NOTES

How do you store your vinyl? I've stored my own collection in various ways over the years. Which has taught me a thing or two about the subject...

It's one of life's difficult questions. One that only a vinyl head would find deeply fascinating, and something that would possibly leave anyone else bemused or bored. How exactly do you store your vinyl?

My own quest has arrived at four separate answers for four separate eras of record collecting. The first ran through the 80s and 90s, and was as much about my passion for vinyl as any method of storage. I'd call it 'Everything Everywhere'. I was buying as many records as I could, and didn't care if every room of the house I lived in was full of them.

It started with 12" singles. Then a stream of shaped picture discs. By the 90s, I was at record fairs as much as possible, which was a great source of cheap 70s LPs (especially from the prog end of the spectrum). How these were stored was not an issue – everywhere I moved I took them all with me, and just filled every corner of every room.

Jump forwards to the noughties, family life had evolved around me and space was at a premium. But for me, that era fortunately coincided with vinyl's fallow years when CD was at its height, vinyl production was at an all-time low, and streaming was arriving to change all of our digital lives forever.

I couldn't part with my records but didn't need them physically at hand to listen to music. This, combined with the lack of space, led to a great idea: the vinyl fireplace. I found I could store more than 150 records if stacked two-high in the space of an unused Victorian fireplace. So that's where they went. Impossible to retrieve particular records, of course, but I didn't need to. They weren't going anywhere and still looked pretty impressive. A statement piece that Kevin McCloud would be proud of.

No matter how closed-off an old fireplace is, it's still a dust magnet

At the beginning of this decade, I reached a turning point on vinyl collecting, realising it was time to be selective, rather than be a hoarder. Instead of buying each and every track I loved or liked on vinyl, it was time to trim the collection, and pick and choose. Spotify was to blame here: sheer ease of use (and portability) started to outweigh the attraction of many of my records (not least that 70s prog department).

I also realised something quite distressing when I took all the vinyl out of the fireplace a few years later. No matter how closed-off an old fireplace is, it's still a dust magnet. And the idea of stacking vinyl two-high with no shelving was not my greatest idea.

All of these learnings bring me to my present and recommended plan for vinyl storage, and my top three tips. First, proper shelving. Second, everything centralised in one room of the house. No one wants to see your vinyl everywhere they move (and it also makes it tricky to find the particular record you're after when you need it). And thirdly, let's be selective. It's about quality not quantity. The best record collection is self-contained, easily accessible and expertly curated. Not that I would have dreamt of thinking like that back in the 80s.

THE VINYLIST KYLE DALE

All roads lead almost exclusively to Manchester for this collector

What was the first record you bought?
"The Verve, *Urban Hymns*. 1997, Manchester. I was 13 years old and still listen to it weekly. This prompted me to go back to their earlier stuff, which blew me away. It was all Oasis and other Manchester bands from then on. First CD would be more embarrassing: Gala, *Freed From Desire*."

Which artists and genres are you most interested in?
"Britpop-era indie, some new stuff, too. Oasis and The Verve are my main passion, which will either please or annoy people. The La's, Cast, Courteeners, Joy Division, Doves et al. I also vaguely collect Factory Records releases, I was aiming for every release and have got about 65% of them. Some brand new bands to me would be Dirty Circus, The Lathums or Pink Shirts For Pale People."

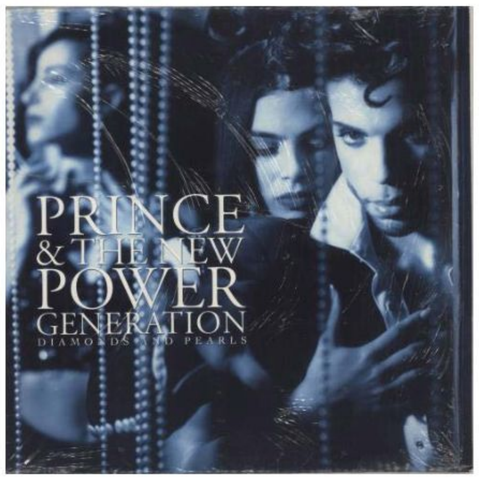
How many records do you have?
"I would estimate around 2,000 LPs, maybe 500 singles. I also keep a medium-sized CD collection, of stuff not released on vinyl mainly. My Instagram (kyle1.britpopvinyl) is now over 9,000 followers from sharing my collection of records/memorabilia, so I get the odd up-and-coming band asking me to review and share their record to gain them more followers. This is smart, as I get to hear their stuff early, have a signed copy for myself and one to send to a random new follower they get."

What's the most valuable record in your collection?
"It's probably Oasis related. I have all their original-press albums and boxsets sealed and open (you can't just keep sealed copies, they are to be heard young hipsters!). Some are signed by various band members. Maybe the *Columbia* 1993 promo, sealed *Familiar To Millions*, or the Big Brother complete boxset. Fac2 is maybe the most valuable to me personally, as it was a gift when I was a kid."

What's the holy grail record that you'd most like to own?
"I did have a holy grail list years ago, but as mad as it is I ticked them all off. As my era is the 90s, with patience they do crop up. I have a bit of an obsession now for meeting bands and getting my original-press collections signed. That has taken over my life a bit actually. It won't ever happen for Oasis now with them scrapping, but maybe a fully signed Verve if it exists."

What's your listening setup?
"Rega P2 turntable, Naim cables connecting to a Pro-Ject preamp, Naim cables connecting to a Cambridge amp. With a Pioneer CD player wired in, too. BOSS headphones."

MOST VALUABLE VINYL



PRINCE & THE NEW POWER GENERATION
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1970 UK Apple label 12-track stereo LP, housed in a fully laminated picture sleeve. Original Ringo Apple LPs are becoming increasingly difficult to find! PCS7101.
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GEORGE HARRISON
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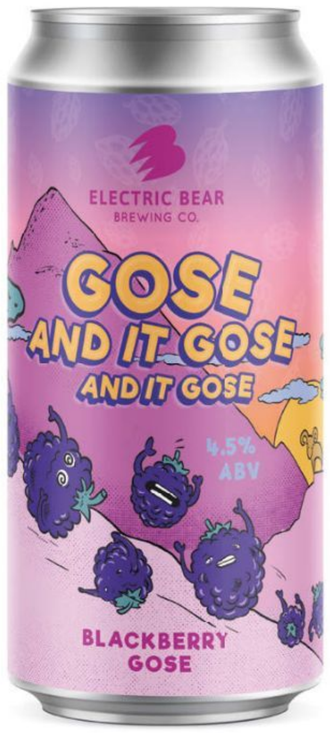
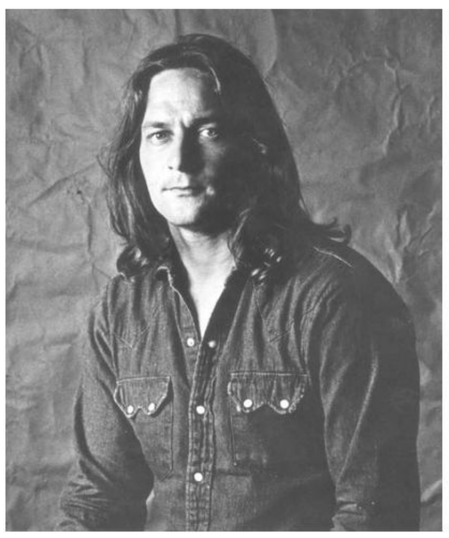
Rare original 1969 UK vinyl LP on the short-lived Zapple label. Matrix numbers on both sides end '-1', indicating this is the first pressing. Fully laminated picture sleeve designed by George and complete with original printed inner sleeve, now very hard to find! ZAPPLE02
£250

Now Spinning

The 12 tracks we've been playing to death this month while drinking Electric Bear's deliciously tart blackberry-flavoured Gose And It Gose And It Gose



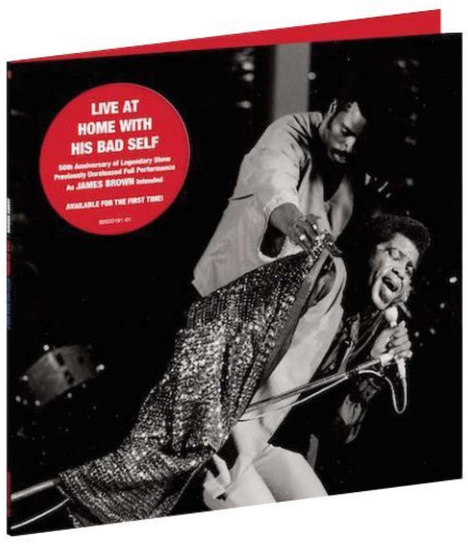
Lady Cab Driver **Prince** (Warner)
Forgotten Eyes **Big Thief** (4AD)
Air BnB **Kim Gordon** (Matador)
The Runner **Foals** (Transgressive)
Dexter & Sinister **Elbow** (Polydor)
All Night Party **A Certain Ratio** (Rhino)
Lost Heads **Moon Duo** (Sacred Bones)
Breakfast In Bed **Dusty Springfield** (Universal)
Love Like Anthrax **Gang Of Four** (Rhino)
Cool Waters **Tanita Tikaram** (Needle Mythology)
Village Blues **John Coltrane** (Impulse)
Jogging **Richard Dawson** (Weird World)



There's No Other Way

Gene Clark's lost classic gets Abbey Road treatment

4AD have announced an anniversary reissue of Gene Clark's 1974 masterpiece *No Other*, on 8 November. One of the great cult albums of all time, the former Byrd's finest work flopped on release and was deleted soon after. Five years ago, members of Beach House, Fleet Foxes, Grizzly Bear and The Walkmen toured the album to raise awareness of its enduring brilliance. The original tapes have been remastered at Abbey Road resulting in a stunning 5.1 Surround mix of the album. The takes have been mixed by Gene Clark expert, author and Long Ryders frontman Sid Griffin, and Fairport Convention and Nick Drake producer John Wood. The album is pressed on silver vinyl with an exclusive 7", poster, Blu-Ray and 80-page hardbound book, with all orders from the 4AD store including two exclusive flexi 7"s.



JOHN DIETRICH

WHO'S BAD?

James Brown's legendary homecoming show in Augusta Georgia on 1 October, 1969 gets a 50th anniversary 2LP vinyl release this month via Republic/ UMC. The newly mixed package includes seven never-before-issued performances. *Live at Home With His Bad Self* is out on 25 October.

do you have a record collection to sell?

top prices paid for vinyl LPs, 12"s, 7"s, singles, EPs, CDs,

autographs, music memorabilia, concert programmes & more

posters, handbills, tickets, picture discs,

coloured vinyl records, box sets, limited editions

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SIR WAS

Swedish sideman takes his rightful place in the spotlight with confident second LP

With its title wholly apposite, *Holding On To A Dream* is the culmination of many years toiling in the shadows as a session musician for Swedish multi-instrumentalist Joel Wästberg.

His second full-length album, released through Memphis Industries, is a more confident, fully realised follow-up to 2017's *Digging A Tunnel*, the record that saw him finally fulfil his ambition of stepping out from the sideman fringes to make his own solo album. Self-produced, and recorded in his own studio on the outskirts of Gothenburg, its shimmering electro-pop motifs are inspired by jazz saxophonist Wästberg's love of classic soul and old-school hip-hop records, while Little Dragon make a guest appearance on lead single *Deployed*.

"It's a bit more bright and luxurious, a bit less lo-fi," says Wästberg. "I"m very happy about the first album and I did what I wanted to do with it, but this one I felt interested in a bigger, richer, more high-end sound. I call it, with a touch of humour, emo-funk. I tried to make some groovy music, but when I start singing on top of it, it's like, 'oooh life, oooh me' and a lot of emotional shit going on. I tried to be, 'stop with this whining', but I always end up in the same place, I can't control it, it's emo-funk!"

Thrown into the emo-funk melange alongside a record collection spanning Dudley Perkins, Madlib, J Dilla, MF Doom and Stevie Wonder are the influences of Wästberg's time spent studying at the University of Kwasulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa.

"It had a huge impact on me," he recalls. "I played with a lot of different musicians and listened to a lot of stuff live, picked up a lot of records. It was monumental. It's in me now, it's amazing. It opened up my eyes to a lot of aspects of music and playing, having music as a thing you do together, a driving force of life. It was an amazing time."

Having returned from Africa and joined the session circuit, the fateful decision to overcome years of self doubt and the fear of failure that releasing your own material can provoke in a musician came while Wästberg was touring with Jose Gonzalez's band Junip.

"I was just the percussionist on tour and then I bumped into the guys from City Slang at Primavera festival in Barcelona. I was just finishing up my album and wanted someone to put it out. I didn't expect anyone to want to, but I secretly dreamt someone would. I sent them an email, it was very short, saying 'we met two weeks ago at the festival' and added a SoundCloud link. I got a response 22 minutes later, which was fantastic. I was very nervous, sending them my music. They responded immediately and asked for another song, then another, and it ended up with me sending the whole album. They were very fast in saying they wanted to do it. It was like a dream.

"I was working as a musician for other artists, but I always had this urge and was kind of frustrated and realised I had to make my own album, as I was getting more and more frustrated about things, other artists' choices. I was becoming a bad band member and there was no real option, I had to put something out for my own health."

Hold On To The Dream is out now on Memphis Industries. Sir Was is on tour across the UK, starting at the Picture House Social, in Sheffield on 19 November

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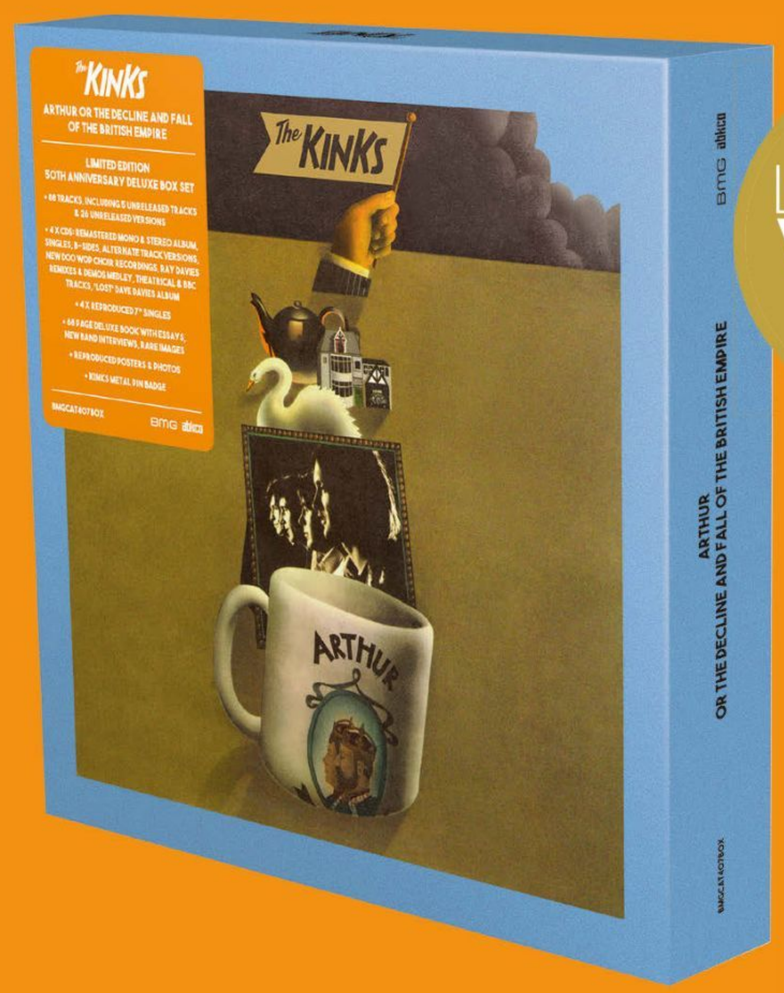

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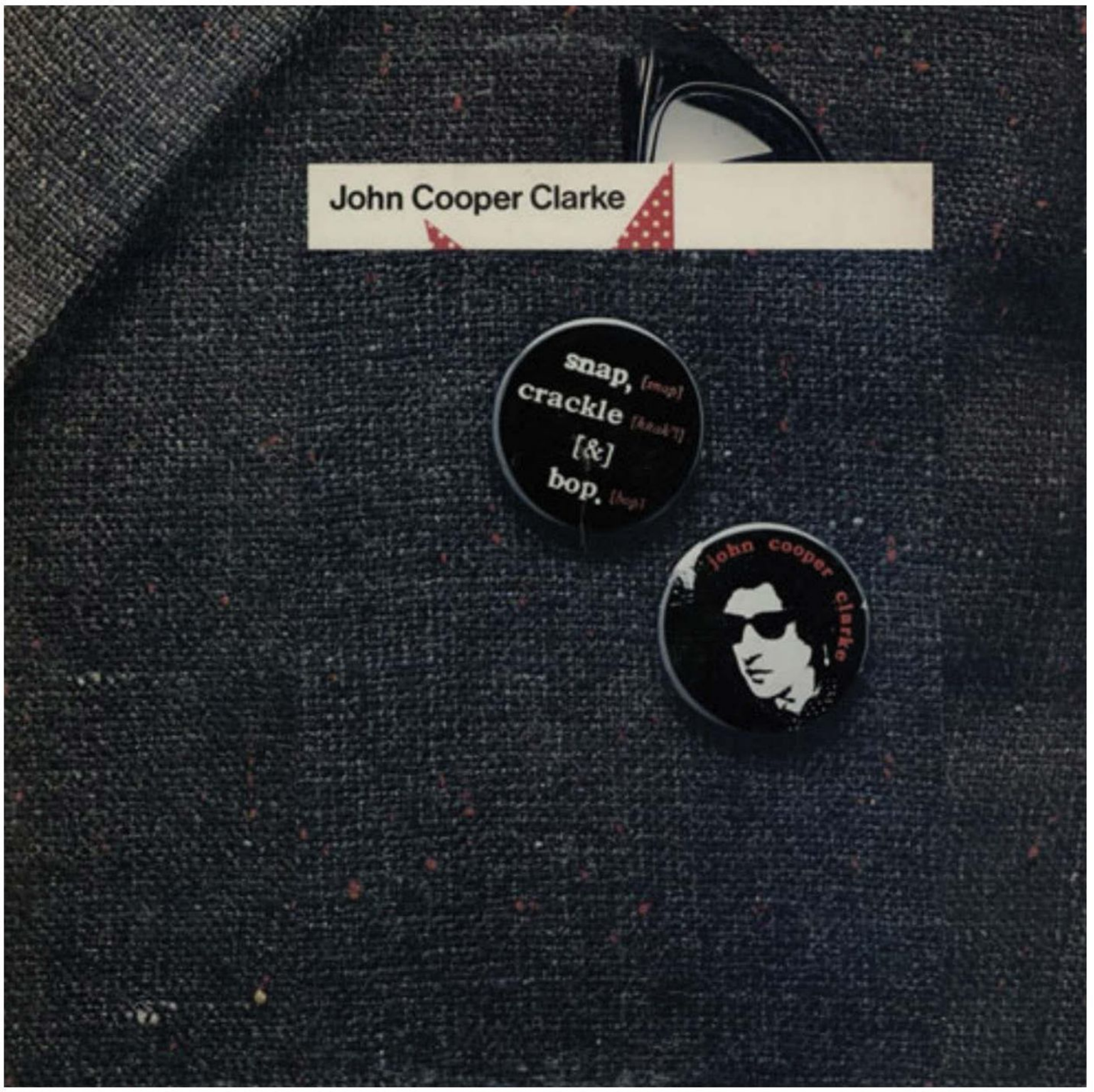

#30 John Cooper Clarke
SNAP, CRACKLE & BOP

Famed Factory Records artist in chief Peter Saville was the creative mind behind the cover of John Cooper Clarke's fourth album and third for major label Epic. Riffing on the droll Salford performance poet's ubiquitous suit jacket, the image, shot by photographer Bob Elsdale, is a close-up of the jacket's lapel. Collectors will be well aware that there are three different incarnations. First pressings have a booklet of JCC's poetry held in a separate, stuck-on cardboard jacket pocket, with the title 'Snap Crackle & Bop' sticking out of the pocket. These originals fetch up to £35 on Discogs. Copies from the second run are less valuable, with no separate pocket and the album title on a sticker. A third version has a traditional standard sleeve, minus the added-on pocket and stickers. Saville deployed a nice touch on the rear of the sleeve, with the album's tracklisting written in a biro font on the cuff of the model's shirt.

The album was produced by Martin Hannett and featured The Invisible Girls, in which the grizzled studio man played bass, as Clarke's backing band. The credit on the rear reads: "Extra special thanks to Vinnie Riley. The Invisible Girls are the cheese nightmares are Martin Hannett & Steve Hopkins!" A 2005 CD-only reissue came with three bonus tracks, including a live version of the brilliantly caustic *Twat*.

ENTERTAINMENT & MUSIC

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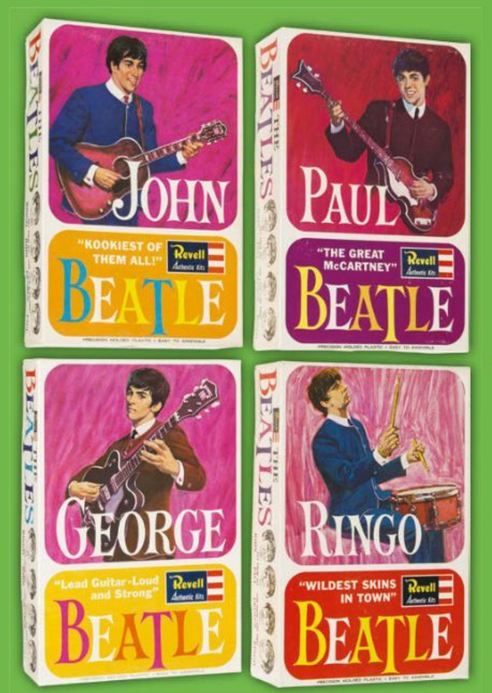
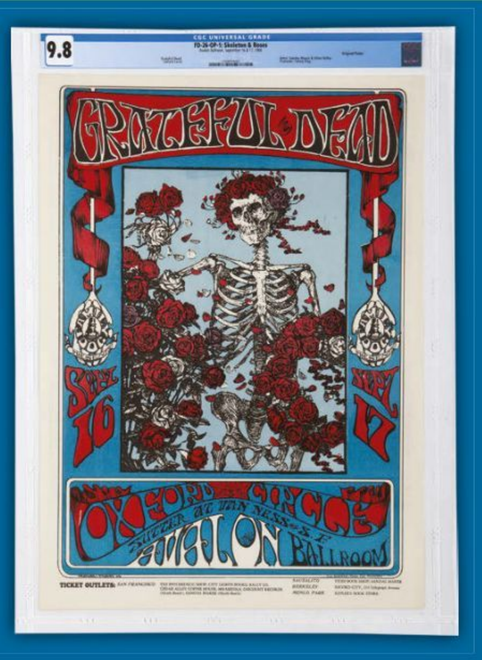


The Beatles Complete Set of Four Revell Model Kits (NEMS, 1964)

Beatle Wing Dings High Top White sneakers with box

The Beatles Vintage Set of Christmas Ornament in Box, Red (4) (Italy, 1964)



Grateful Dead "Skeleton and Roses" 1966: FD 26 -9.8 Poster + Letter

Beatles 1966 Shea Stadium Concert Poster

The Beatles Yesterday and Today Butcher Cover Stereo Vinyl LP (Capitol, ST, 2553, 2996)

The Who Original Vintage Custom Tour Jacket (1973). Very Rare.

Queen "Crazy Little Thing Called Love" RIAA Gold Sales Award Presented to Freddie Mercury (Elektra, 1979)

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Inquiries:

Garry Shrum
214.409.1585
GarryS@HA.com

Pete Howard
214.409.1756
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LED ZEPPELIN

HAWAII, 1969

Led Zeppelin arrive in Honolulu on a Pan American 707 jet clutching the master tapes for *Led Zeppelin II*. Written on the road while the band toured the US amid a whirlwind of booze, drugs and groupies, it was recorded in multiple locations. The final record was mixed in 48 hours at A&R Studios in New York with Eddie Kramer. It would become the biggest selling album of 1969 in the States, toppling *Abbey Road* from top spot on the Billboard Charts. Kramer later revealed that the famous echo sound in *Whole Lotta Love* was a mistake. "It was one of the biggest mistakes I ever made. We were in the middle of the song, and it comes to the break: 'Woman…' And you hear another one – well, one of the other vocal tracks was breaking through because we were using this funky old console. It wouldn't allow me to turn the vocal off; I couldn't get rid of it. Page and I looked at each other at the same time, and we grabbed a knob and threw a shitload of reverb on it. We laughed and said, 'Let's leave it'." ●

ROBBIE BASHO
VISIONS OF THE COUNTRY

MARK LANEGAN

Screaming Trees frontman, Queens Of The Stone Age veteran and general legend Mark Lanegan shares his love of an American Primitive cult classic. **Felix Rowe** takes note

Thinking back, I was always a fan of John Fahey and some of Leo Kottke's stuff, those American Primitive dudes, then I came across a copy of this Robbie Basho record at the local used record store. I already had one of his albums, where he was just playing acoustic guitar, and I loved that. But *Visions Of The Country* (1978) was the first time I heard his singing. I was like, wait a minute, this is insane! His voice adds a completely different element that takes it to a totally different place. It's one of those records that immediately grabbed me by the heart and never let go.

He switches from falsetto to tenor in the blink of an eye. It's just so unlike anything else I've ever heard. He goes into these insane long tails and then there's this falsetto that shakes like a motherfucker! But he's always right on it. Nobody has ever sung like this, except maybe Freddie Mercury in the shower. I'm aware a lot of people are turned off by his voice, because it's so over the top and operatic at times. But if I could sing like him, I would fucking give up everything I've ever had!

It's what he's singing about that nails you, too; these odes to some pastoral landscape that's only known to him. Odes to water, mountain, forest, desert. Then there's *Orphan's Lament,* and you find out that he was an orphan himself, so it becomes deeply moving. He's a grown man, still grieving the fact that he never knew his parents. It's effective on so many levels.

He went through various spiritual phases over his career, but this one distills all of that stuff into one album. It's a magic, mystical, otherworldly record. It's just the committed nature of the way this guy played the guitar and sang at the same time. I found it immediately compelling. It's like the *Trout Mask Replica* of acoustic guitar playing!

Real genius, but also so organic. It seems like everything he's doing is right off the top of his head, but there's no way it could be, because it's so intricate and technical. I can't imagine anybody being able to sing like this or play like this, but then do the two things at once. That's like climbing 10 Mount Everests all stacked on top of each other!

Visions Of The Country is an outlier that remains outside of time, either 500 years too early or 500 years too late. There's no touchstone to even compare it to. People might throw it in the same box as John Fahey and Leo Kottke, but you can't really because of the element of his voice and the fact that on this particular record he plays piano. It's just as manic as the way he'll take off on a tangent with his guitar, suddenly becoming 10 times faster. Then, on *Leaf In The Wind*, he does this whistling that's just so eerie. I've listened to that song 15 times in a row before and it's sent a chill up my spine every time.

I almost didn't buy it because I saw it was on Windham Hill Records. In the 80s, I worked in the warehouse for a chain of record stores and Windham Hill was, like, Yanni-type music, shitty New Age stuff. So I thought, oh is this the one where Robbie Basho went New Age? I'll stay away from this! But it was only a buck-fifty and it turned out to be the best buck-fifty I ever spent.

It's by far his greatest achievement. An absolute masterpiece that feels as though it was invented on the spot. This guy did not give a fuck. The more I listen to it, the more I understand what an achievement the record is. It just doesn't happen with a normal person, it happens with someone who's in touch with something from another world. ●

ROBBIE BASHO
Visions of the Country

10 Questions For... JASON ISBELL

Felix Rowe catches up with the four-time Grammy winner as he re-releases a pair of classic albums made with the 400 Unit

You're reissuing your self-titled 2009 album and *Here We Rest* (2011). Why these two and why now?
"Well, really, because I own the masters to them! We weren't working with Dave Cobb in those days, so I thought, I'd love to hear what he could do with these albums. The songs are still gonna sound like the songs, and honestly, there's not a whole lot of difference, it really just sounds better. It's not the kind of thing where we made a dance mix... although that would've been fun! Our primary goal was really just to make the best examples of the studio recordings that we could."

Did you enjoy revisiting older tracks?
"It's fun to go back to songs like *Cigarettes And Wine*. A lot of these songs I don't perform as much anymore, but now, I'm gonna go back into that catalogue. With *Alabama Pines*, which we play pretty frequently live, it's nice to go back to the original recording and see what headspace we were in. Sometimes my wife reminds me, 'You were a good songwriter before you got sober'."

What does Alabama mean to you? That sense of place and the heritage that comes with it...
"Well, it's what I have, you know. It's like, how important is your foot? I mean, it's your foot, you're not going to get another one. So, it is really the platform that I'm standing on when I'm saying the things that I'm saying. The place where I grew up, it's never been perfect, but in a lot of situations the best art comes out of places that are flawed and beautiful at the same time. I got very lucky growing up around Muscle Shoals, around those musicians, Donnie Fritts and Jimmy Johnson."

How important was it to play with local musicians in the 400 Unit?
"I wanted to work with people I knew. Most of us grew up together, so it establishes a shorthand of influence. When I tell them I want something to sound like Joe South, they know what I'm talking about. We have a musical language that works a whole lot faster than English."

Your residencies at the iconic Ryman have become an annual event. What draws you to that venue?
"I love that place, partially because of the historical significance of it, for sure. But it's a place that Nashville values very highly. They put money into it and work really hard to keep it a proper venue, whether you're in awe of being in the Ryman Auditorium or not."

This year is your inaugural ShoalsFest. How did you choose who to book?
"I just asked the people I wanted the most and they all said yes. I think part of the reason Mavis Staples and Sheryl Crow agreed to do it was because it's in Muscle Shoals. Mavis told me she hasn't been back since she recorded there with The Staple Singers and was really looking forward to seeing some of the people they worked with in the 60s and 70s. Mavis is probably as cool as a human person can get! The area deserves some good live music. It's gonna be a lotta fun."

Do you collect vinyl?
"Oh yeah, I've got a big ol' wall of it. My wife was on tour a while back in Arkansas, and she found a copy of the first Big Star album on vinyl and it looks like it hasn't been played. I told [Big Star drummer] Jody Stephens and he said, 'I don't even have a copy of that album on vinyl!' My wife's got some old Bob Wills records that are extremely collectable and really, really hard to find, so she's probably got a better vinyl collection than I have."

Does the physical format still matter?
"I find more enjoyment and fulfilment in listening to a physical album, because I still read liner notes and stare at the pictures and, you know, somebody had to get off the couch and go flip the album over. We listen to vinyl all the time at home. I think physical formats really lend themselves to listening as a primary activity, rather than listening while doing something else. If you're listening to a record, more often than not, you're doing that because you want to listen to that album. Also, I wind up being more aware of what the artist's intentions were."

Is there another album in the works?
"We're supposed to go into the studio in December and we usually do what we're supposed to do, so I imagine we'll have another album in the can before the year is out. I'm still in the phase of trying to find perfect melodies and solving the puzzles. Right now, it just sounds like one guy with some acoustic guitars singing a bunch of songs."

You have a tattoo of the lyrics to *Boots Of Spanish Leather*. What does Dylan mean to you?
"I just don't think it would be possible for people like me to write the kind of songs we do and talk about the things that are going on inside our brains without Dylan. He was the first person who made that transition; took the internal and made it external. For me, that's everything. So it's kind of like a Ford with a tattoo of a wheel on it. I mean, one couldn't exist without the other." ●

JASON ISBELL

"SOMETIMES MY WIFE REMINDS ME, 'YOU WERE A GOOD SONGWRITER BEFORE YOU GOT SOBER'"

DANNY CLINCH

Land Of The Giants

"It's all Brexit, death and bewilderment with flashes of the really uplifting and positive." So says Guy Garvey of Elbow's eighth album *Giants Of All Sizes* – in which the band shook everything up, struggled with the futility of songwriting, recorded in the wrong city and emerged bruised, battered and brilliant. **John Earls** hears why Elbow have gone "dark as fuck"

Elbow's new album, *Giants Of All Sizes,* arrives just two years after their seventh LP *Little Fictions* reached No 1. For a band of their stature, that's a quick turnaround, especially as they fitted *The Best Of Elbow* in between. Craig Potter, Elbow's keyboardist and the band's sole producer since 2014's *The Take Off And Landing Of Everything*, agrees the album was relatively straightforward, noting: "It was pretty easy, as we were all raring to go after *Little Fictions*. We started writing soon after, which was exciting, and really it's all been a continuation."

Potter's attitude greatly amuses Guy Garvey. Interviewed a few days later at the studio where he works in Brixton, three miles from his home in South London, Garvey is every bit as good-natured as you'd expect from Elbow's concerts, long since the most affirming communal experience in modern music. Garvey gently teases the studio receptionist after hearing how his unchained motorcycle got stolen, provides a funny and heartfelt discourse for the next hour and has even brought in a packed lunch to eat between interview duties and recording his Sunday afternoon 6 Music show, Finest Hour.

Ever since *The Seldom Seen Kid* welcomed Elbow into the arenas, their image as music's kindest souls has remained intact. But *Giants Of All Sizes* was far from a calm ride, for Garvey at least. "It was straightforward from the technical side," he acknowledges. "Lyrically, it's been a lot more difficult. The lads hold me to the flame where my lyrics are concerned, and there's been more pushback on this record than any previous one. If I'm honest, that's been quite hard, as sometimes they're pushing back on things that are really close to my heart."

Since *Little Fictions* was completed, Garvey and his actor wife Rachel Stirling became parents to son Jack in April 2017. Eleven months later, the singer's father Don died after a short illness. Then two of his closest friends died: "I carried two coffins and gave two eulogies at the same chapel within eight days. It was fucking tough."

A wider impact happened two months after Jack's birth, when Garvey was still new to London after a lifetime in Manchester, as Grenfell Tower burned. The tragedy inspired *White Noise White Heat*, the angriest song Elbow have ever recorded, written while Garvey doubted his worth as a songwriter, with its pay-off "I believe I'm giving in". Garvey's resting beam face tenses in fury at

Eight albums in and the band are still happy to drink together

such easily avoidable disaster, his voice cracked with anger, rumbling: "For people to burn to death for being poor and for nobody to be held accountable, for health and safety to slide, all to make another quid for a few developers who've already got millions? It was the most appalling, stark illustration of inconstancies and inequality. I wouldn't dare try to write a song about Grenfell from the point of view of a survivor or a victim in a million years. What *White Noise White Heat* is about is how thoroughly pathetic and inconsequential my privilege is when looking at that situation as a white, middle-class man. And how utterly fucking useless I felt, how utterly pointless songwriting felt." The chorus of "I just want to get high" highlights the song's sense of desperation, as Garvey admits: "Everybody wants to get high, because you couldn't function otherwise. We're on a terrible precipice with Brexit and the damage already done by austerity. The world's weather is turning on us and it's falling on deaf ears. It's not convenient to think about these things and the whole of the country instead likes to drink, to get high and that doesn't surprise me – as I'm one of them."

As Garvey points out, the mere fact he's written a song about not wanting to write songs means, well, he's writing songs. As inconsequential as a new Elbow album is next to global catastrophe, at least it's bloody magnificent on the scale of musical endeavours. It's close in spirit to the unsettling freeform menace of the band's earliest albums. "I've really enjoyed getting heavier and picking up a guitar again," smiles Garvey. "It's been a cathartic experience. Hopefully people will see the album as edifying in its unequivocal nature, and we've definitely pulled out the prog and classic rock stops. It's been really cool to dig in as a band, but it's dark as fuck."

STARKLY BEAUTIFUL

Potter, equally friendly as his bandmate and possessing a sharp, surreal humour, emphasises a different change in approach. "Releasing *Dexter & Sinister* as the first taste of the album is very much 'old Elbow'," he says of the album's wild opener and first single. "It's definitely not an indie anthem, it's seven minutes long. Once you play arenas, it's hard to put that out of your mind, to not think about what might go down well in a bigger setting. Maybe the feel of our music changed a little bit then."

With Garvey now in London and the rest of Elbow still in Manchester, the band finished demo ideas at home before presenting them to each other. "We wanted each other's original ideas to come through without being diluted," Potter explains. "We didn't want to round the edges off too much, which can happen in a democracy: once everyone has a say, a song idea can come out differently than originally intended. Personally, I wanted a more direct record and we had to let each other have our own thoughts."

Whether it's guitarist Mark Potter's starkly beautiful *The Delayed 3:15* or bassist Pete Turner's sinister *Doldrums*, it's very much a band album. Whereas previous Elbow records have been made in remote locations such as the Isle of Mull, they decided to record album eight in the middle of Hamburg. Or at least that was the intention. "We didn't do our homework properly," laughs Garvey. "We got there and thought, 'Oh fuck, we're miles from anywhere!'" Rather than their intended city break, the quartet were in an industrial estate next to a border patrol unit. Elbow being Elbow, they were still inspired by the beauty around them. There was a Ugandan church downstairs from the fifth-floor studio.

"The singing from the windows on a Sunday was just beautiful," sighs Garvey. "It was certainly a contrast to the Alsatians from the border patrol next door." The sound of hair clippers from a volunteer providing free haircuts for the local Ugandan community

PAUL HUSBAND PHOTOGRAPHY

Fresh Squalls

As well as producing his own band, Craig Potter has made albums with Steve Mason and I Am Kloot. Most recently, Potter produced C Duncan's mesmerising *Health*. "I'm in a privileged position where I'm not looking for production work," says Potter. "From a creative point of view, for me to produce an album, I've got to love it or else it doesn't make sense."

Guy Garvey released his debut solo album *Courting The Squall* in 2015 and has mapped out the follow-up. It won't contain any of his songs which didn't make it onto *Giants Of All Sizes*, as he explains: "Anything I write for Elbow ends up as Elbow. My next solo album will be very different to the first one. I need a very specific person to help me. I need a pianist who doesn't mind me dictating things to them. I want to write the whole record like that before I do anything else with it. I play piano on all Elbow's records somewhere, but I'm crap! I think I have a record in me that requires me to write all the songs with just a piano."

also proved soothing. "It was a beautiful illustration of community service," notes Garvey. "Inspiration is wherever you look, you've just got to find it. Life has kicked my head in for a couple of years and that's all over this record, but it's not like it's done for me. I've still made a record with the lads."

The band were joined in Hamburg by Alex Reeves, the session drummer who has filled in since Richard Jupp quit at the start of recording *Little Fictions* to instead run drumming workshops. Garvey wishes Jupp well and says *Little Fictions* was "a record full of love" rather than anger at his departure, but Potter admits none of the band have seen Jupp since he left. Having written Reeves' parts for him for *Little Fictions*, the new drummer this time joined in the songwriting rehearsals.

"Al's technical excellence has upped everyone else's game a little," says Garvey. "Having someone from outside a group who've been together nearly 30 years hold a mirror to you is refreshing." Potter adds: "Al is very creative, and he's great at knowing when to step back. If there were creative disagreements, I'd notice Al slipping out the door at just the right time. He was very aware of our situation." Could he become an official band member? "No-one has ever thought it an option," states Potter. "It just wouldn't be right. If we were trying to recapture a band feel with someone new, it'd never, ever happen. We've been together for 27 years." Not that Reeves doesn't fit in. "He's a right laugh," says Garvey. "He's piss funny and that's really important."

There was vague talk of bringing another outsider to the band. Elbow last worked with an outside producer on 2003's *Cast Of Thousands*, co-producing their second album with Blur/Depeche Mode associate Ben Hillier. "There's always talk of getting other producers involved," says Potter. "But I had quite a clear idea of how I wanted this record to differ from *Little Fictions*, so I was very pleased the lads let me produce this one again. Everyone is really chuffed with it, but I've a feeling that next time we might ask around for producers and see what happens."

The new writing and recording methods proved so creative that many songs are left over from the sessions. Some were too similar to *Little Fictions*, while Potter admits: "I approach production from the hip-hop side and probably went too far down that road sometimes, where no-one could see how it would turn into an Elbow song." Garvey wrote four songs about his father's death which aren't on the album. One of them would have been *Giants Of All Sizes*' title track. Written when Garvey's family were living in Vancouver

"We've pulled out the prog and classic rock stops. It's been really cool to dig in as a band"

Piccadilly Circus

Craig Potter admits he's not much of a vinyl buyer, mainly listening to albums on car journeys and on Spotify. Guy Garvey's vinyl may be in storage, but he's still a big lover of Piccadilly Records in Manchester. Now 45, he recalls buying Pink Floyd's *Meddle* for £5.49 when he was 19 and unemployed: "And I really couldn't afford it." He also tried swapping the price sticker on a second-hand copy of 1971 compilation *Bombers*. "The owner saw right through me and not only swapped it back, he made me pay 50p more," laughs Garvey. "He knew I wanted it so badly, and he was right, as I proved when I found the money and came angrily stomping back in to get it." Piccadilly Records also proved influential to Elbow, as the first shop to stock their debut EP *Newborn*. "I had to stop myself going in every day to see if we'd sold any copies," he recalls. "I couldn't believe it when we sold 15."

where his wife was filming, the singer was distraught at the city's poverty, admitting: "I don't know why I expected more from Canada, but I did. The Fentanyl drug problem is huge there, women in their 80s are on the streets and it looks like the end of the world." While Vancouver inspired the album's unsettling *Doldrums*, Garvey's song tying his upset at the city in with his father's death was "too mournful and just too sad. I didn't want the record to be defined by my dad dying."

***Giants Of All Sizes* is released on 11 October, a limited exclusive seagrass green gatefold edition will be available**

The song most obviously inspired by Don Garvey is heartbreaking. The final song on the album, *Weightless,* reflects on the ease of loving both father and son. "Jack being born made my dad's death a part of things rather than the end of things," says Garvey. "I no longer consider myself my own man. As most dads and lads experience, at various points our relationship was difficult and awkward. Only in somebody's passing do you sum them up and tie them in a bow, decide whether they were a positive or negative influence on the earth. My dad was a great bloke, and that's there for all time."

Garvey jokes about seeing both his own and his wife's traits emerging in their son, but adds: "There's a soberness to it, too. As a young man, I just wanted to stamp my mark and be remembered in some way. I was angrily determined to do that, and I think I've done it. If I died tomorrow, I've got stuff to show for it, and I've had a great time doing it."

NO DADA SINGING ANYMORE

Garvey Jr is already a fan of David Bowie, Prince and Kate Bush. "Jack will ask for 'Dada singing' and I'll go, 'Oh great!' and put some Elbow on," says Garvey. "After 30 seconds, he'll go 'No Dada singing anymore' and I'll think 'Fucking hell, Jack, really? Harsh!'" With Garvey's vinyl collection in storage while Jack grows up, most of the singer's music listening, outside of research for his 6 Music show, is done while bathing his son.

Along with Mark Ronson, Lewis Capaldi and Mahalia, Elbow are ambassadors for National Album Day on October 12, with Jack Garvey sharing his dad's taste in recent albums. Craig Potter chooses Little Simz's *Grey Area* and Villagers' *The Art Of Pretending To Swim* as recent favourites, while Garvey nominates former I Am Kloot bassist Pete Jobson's debut solo album, Jesca Hoop's *Stonechild* and Adrianne Lenker's *Abysskiss*. "Jack loves Adrianne's album," beams Garvey. "He sings along to the melody of her song *Blue And Red Horses*, which breaks my heart every time."

Despite the sombre subject matter of *Giants Of All Sizes*, being in Elbow still seems like the most fun it's possible to have. After 27 years, the essentials remain. "We all said in 1992 that, the minute it stops being fun, we'll fuck it off," summarises Garvey. "And it is still fun. We were all out together in Manchester this week and it was hilarious. We went to the pub and got plastered. At midnight, I said I was going back to my hotel and Craig looked at me like I was mad. We're still choosing to drink together, that's a good sign." Raise your glasses, the working methods are new, but Elbow's unquenchable spirit is still the same.

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I want to learn how to articulate my own fear, frustration, anger, bewilderment, fascination, curiosity... I feel like I'm getting closer to something. I can imagine singing these songs when I'm 70

Their second album of 2019 and perhaps their most potent statement yet, *Two Hands* sees New York's Big Thief deliver an urgent global message. **Gary Walker** goes into the mountains to meet a band who've found a home on the road

MICHAEL BUISHAS

Big Thief at this year's Green Man festival, with Adrianne wigging out

Please wake up. Cradled in the protective embrace of Sugar Loaf Mountain, Big Thief are delivering their sermon. With the Brecon Beacons sky melting slowly from deep azure to salmon pink high above the stage, the New York band take just three words of their much-anticipated set at Green Man festival to signal the urgent rallying cry at the heart of new album, *Two Hands*.

Following only five months after the record described by the band as its "celestial twin", *U.F.O.F.*, and their fourth album in as many years, *Two Hands* is unquestionably, overtly concerned with the shameful mess the human race has made of the planet we call home, the unabated assault man has wrought upon mother nature.

And Big Thief are here to talk about it. Marching onstage, Adrianne Lenker leading the way in black mesh top, neon wig and pencilled-on moustache, they set about their task with fervent resolve. Those first three words of opening song *Shoulder* introduce a heartfelt plea for humanity to emerge from the desensitised inertia which sees us sleepwalking towards oblivion as forests burn, ice caps melt and all the while big, egotistical men count their money and jostle for power.

By the time Big Thief unleash the terrifying evocations of the album's first single, *Not*, Adrianne warning ominously of "fire lapping at the creek" and a "planet not spinning", the wig has fallen off. The band locking into a telepathic groove around her, the singer forces her guitar into her vintage Magnatone amp, yielding great ungodly howls of feedback at the culmination of a searing solo.

Big Thief mean business, and they've been doing this night after night, spreading their message around Europe. In the last 10 days alone, they've played in Portugal, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Hungary, France and Belgium. Time is running out and the alt-folk quartet band are not interested in resting.

Rewind four hours and we're ensconced in an unassuming cabin backstage with Adrianne and the band's affable drummer James Krivchenia. They've just arrived on a sleeper bus from Belgium's Pukkelpop festival and are decompressing, Adrianne with closely-cropped hair wearing her torn black T-shirt inside out and sipping from a tin mug of hot water and ginger, James relaxed in bright pink shorts and baseball cap.

DARK HINTERLANDS

Previously Adrianne, who was born in Indianapolis before moving to Brooklyn, where she met Big Thief guitarist Buck Meek and formed the band in 2005, has written about the minutiae of human relationships. The focus has been family, the home and motherhood, while probing the dark hinterlands where violence and sex meet. This time round was the intention to address global issues? Her reply is immediate, her voice faltering, yet the focus absolute. "Yeah, I want to learn how to articulate my own fear, frustration, anger, bewilderment, fascination, curiosity… *anger*. Just being one of the many little beings on this planet.

"I'm learning more and more, and I think there's no way to not feel unless you're completely desensitised, numb or cut off. We're all part of this, all in the same boat and when any part of the earth or any human gets injured we're just hurting ourselves.

"I want to find a way to write about it even more clearly, but from a place where there's a meeting point, not from a place that divides a room. Bringing people together regardless of their political, religious, or whatever, views. The point of the music is not to perpetuate war and polarisation but to bring more unity and bring people into that place of deep empathy where they can feel the other as themselves. There is no other and no alien. It's a different record in that way. We were trying to offer an embrace, and start to carve into the meat of dealing with stuff on a global level."

Spend any time with Adrianne and you understand immediately how entwined with nature she and the band are. Ask her why they chose to release *Two Hands* only 161 days after *U.F.O.F.* and it becomes clear that for her writing is not a choice; it's a compulsion, a necessity. Growing up in a Midwest religious

NICI EBERL

cult, Adrianne was pushed by her father for a time towards becoming a child pop star. She's been writing songs since the age of eight and has no intention of pausing to soak up the praise for the first four, critically lauded Big Thief albums. Don't be mistaken in assuming that *Two Hands* is a pious, self-indulgent essay, either. It's their best record yet and Adrianne is fast becoming one of the most evocative writers anywhere in music.

"This is just the beginnings," she says, staring intently into her mug. "I want to grow and develop as a writer between now and whenever I die. I just want to learn as much as possible.

"We wanted the two albums to have their own space to shine and have time for people to digest them, because it's a lot to digest. But we also wanted them to be close enough to feel related, because they are like sister records. We didn't want to wait a full year and a full album cycle, we wanted to put them into the world close together."

Despite those sisterly ties, the two albums were crafted in entirely different locations – *U.F.O.F.* in the cool cabin isolation of Washington State's Bear Creek studios and *Two Hands* in the broiling desert temperatures of Sonic Ranch, among the pecan orchards that flank the Rio Grande along the Mexican border in El Paso, Texas.

"All the songs were in the womb together and then they were born and each contained the opposite," says Adrianne. "As if they were split off as twins and came out as two beings, they are like each other's other half. There's the celestial, milky, ethereal *U.F.O.F.* and then the bones, flesh and blood of *Two Hands*, so they create a complete being, the infinite mixed with the finite, tangible and physical."

The naked honesty of the message on *Two Hands* meant the band recorded live, eschewing overdubs and production tweaks. What you see on stage with Big Thief is what you get on record.

"With those songs, we knew beforehand that the *Two Hands* collection, a lot of it was stuff we'd been playing live," says James, who mixed the record at New York's Bunker Studios with the band's long-time producer Andrew Sarlo. "It felt strongest not too gussied up. It felt strong when it was raw and when we were trying to be the best band we can be together, not trying to nail a perfect, huge sound. There was always an instinct that the record was going to be what we really sound like when we play together, even if we want to sound better than that, or bigger, or more complex or more complicated, that's us to the best of our abilities at that time."

That's nowhere more evident than on the outstanding, seething *Not*. *Two Hands*' lead single has existed in Big Thief's live set for some time, yet has never felt right for any of their albums. It nearly didn't make the cut again. The initial Sonic Ranch version was abandoned, the band finally capturing it in a single take at Sound City in LA.

Adrianne takes up the tale: "It was one take. We really got lost in the song. We recorded it in El Paso, but something just wasn't sitting right. It was fine, but it didn't feel like the most accurate recording of that song."

"It was the one song we redid afterwards," says James. "We were having a lot of trouble sequencing the record. I was of the mind that we couldn't sequence it because *Not* wasn't as strong as it could be. It came and it wasn't, 'Fuck yeah!'. We've played that song live a lot, so we know the 'Fuck yeah' feeling when it happens, and we had to go back in and get that."

Adrianne interjects, the pair lighting up at the memory. "It was the key, the missing link to being able to sequence the whole record. We played like we were playing to a room of 2,000 people. We were just, 'raarrgh'! I remember turning up the amp to 10 for the solo and getting hurt on the strings, and just trying to mess up the sound. It's not even the most amazing guitar solo, but it's just like, 'that's it, to the best of our ability'."

VINYL FIRST

The band also had vinyl on their minds as they finalised the tracklisting, the promo copies labelled simply as 'Side A' and 'Side B'.

"We worked on sequencing it so much, we turned it inside out," says Adrianne. "We always think about vinyl when we sequence, because I feel like that's the starting point and anything from there is cool. Wanting it to sit well as a record and be something that feels cohesive throughout, tells a story and has a natural break in the middle when you flip the record… I can't imagine us being like, 'Oh it's all just on Spotify and people only listen to single tracks anyway'. It's so much more fun to think about records."

With albums pouring out of the band so prolifically, have they had chance to reflect on

> **We worked on sequencing it so much, we turned it inside out**

The Big Three

HOW TO BUY BIG THIEF ON VINYL

MASTERPIECE
2016
SADDLE CREEK
A superb, succinct debut which hinted at Lenker's songwriting brilliance and virtuoso jagged alt-rock guitar playing, the latter to the fore on the feedback-lashed title track. Her fondness for character songs was established, with the wistful *Paul* particularly strong. A limited edition pressing on translucent red vinyl has gone for as much as £123 on Discogs.

CAPACITY
2017
SADDLE CREEK
Album two saw the New York band truly grab the attention of UK audiences, with the supreme *Shark Smile* single becoming their most recognisable anthem. Lenker's writing is powerfully naked, probing family, sex and violence, sometimes all in the same song, while the sombre, hymnal *Mary* is a simply sublime piece of music. There are numerous limited edition alternatives, including Rough Trade and Vinyl Me Please exclusives.

U.F.O.F.
2019
4AD
Perhaps the least immediate of the quartet, *U.F.O.F.* is known among the band as the 'celestial twin' of *Two Hands* but was recorded in a very different environment – the rural quietude of Washington State's Bear Creek studio. The subtlety and synchronicity of a band recording live empowers Lenker to conjure tales of worlds both natural and extraterrestrial. Look out for a Vinyl Me Please run of 750 numbered copies on dark green vinyl.

a journey that's taken them from sleeping in a warehouse and living out of a van to signing to 4AD and becoming one of the most talked-about indie bands on the planet. How much have they changed?

"A lot," answers James emphatically and they both burst into laughter. "I listened to a few songs from *Masterpiece* a couple of weeks ago and it was really trippy. Everyone sounds different. We've all grown and changed so much and everyone has stepped into a much deeper confidence because of how comfortable and supportive we are with each other. It feels like we've changed a lot and come to this place where everyone's trying to fire on all cylinders into the music."

"Gosh, when we started, when I was 24… so much has changed," recalls Adrianne. "We've gotten closer, to each other, to ourselves, to the music and I feel like my writing has changed a lot. It has the same core, but I feel like I'm getting closer to something. I like the songs more, I like what we're doing more."

Indeed, she's already described *Two Hands* as the album she's most proud of. On lo-fi anthem *Forgotten Eyes* Adrianne speaks of the "tear on the common cheek with which we smile" and on *Toy*, Earth is a "Charcoal womb", where "Jet planes purr/ Children burn, faceless vapour". Why do these songs resonate most powerfully with her?

"Well just listen to 'em," she jokes. "They just make me feel a lot and it's a lasting feeling." She pauses pregnantly. "I just feel like there's less and less thought in my writing and more… guts… It feels closer to me somehow, more time-proof, age-proof. I don't feel like, 'this was when I was 21 and feeling all this stuff'. I can imagine singing these songs when I'm 70."

A BIGGER VOICE

Of course, better songs and bigger shows mean bigger crowds. Do the band feel an increased pressure and responsibility? "I don't experience it as pressure," Adrianne answers, "but we do have a responsibility, not just as artists but as people. We can either be caretakers of ourselves, each other and this planet or we can just obliterate it and ourselves. I think the bigger our voice is, that's a privilege and it's powerful to know you have a voice and influence. I want to use that."

"I've always felt that no matter how small or how big the show, there is a responsibility," agrees James. "If you're the one onstage leading a gathering of people, there's the responsibility of at least doing something the best you can. If you're going to be on stage, you should try. Why are you there? If you don't want to be there, you shouldn't be there."

Our mind wanders back to the band's End Of The Road show in 2018 when Adrianne was visibly affected and appeared to be struggling with the occasion. She takes over: "It doesn't mean that you always want to be there, because sometimes you don't want to be on stage. It might even just be as simple as finishing the show, despite feeling like you just want to get off the stage, or making a bunch of mistakes and feeling like it's sloppy, but persevering and loving yourself through it. That can be inspiring and often that is what's inspiring about our shows."

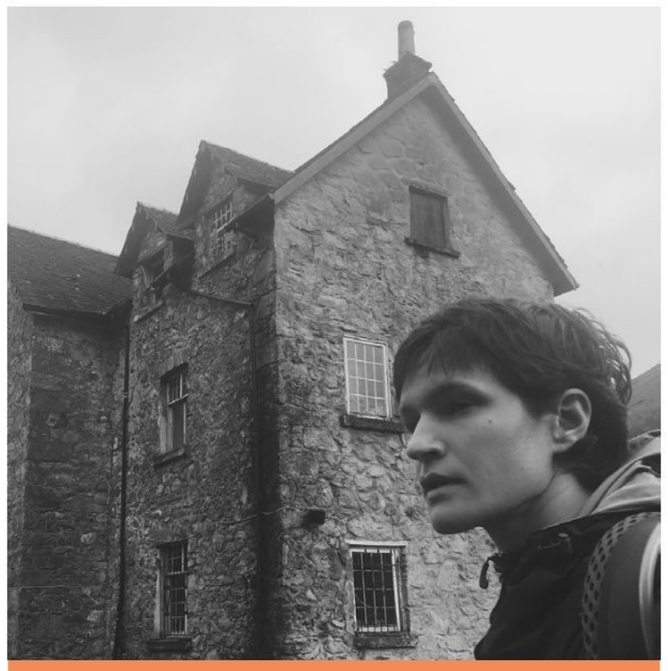
James cannot contain his laughter at this stage, tickled by the image of the band's imperfect live performances.

"They can be all over the place," Adrianne presses on. "Stopping songs, because we're not just about performing and presenting some polished thing where we all really know our parts and it's really put together. No, not at all, we're just trying to give a clear representation of where we're at with the music and with ourselves and that's really vulnerable. Then exposing that vulnerability and imperfection and carrying yourself through it in a way that's loving and playful and invites other people to then say, 'Jeez, I have this and this that I don't like about myself, but I could maybe hold and carry myself through this experience'.

"Contributing to the world doesn't mean you make this grand statement that you know the truth and you're preaching it to people, it can just be this very small thing where you're learning how to tend to the garden just in your immediate vicinity. I want the music to feel like that. I don't want it to be, 'Here's some truth I'm going to spit at you right now'."

A knock on the door from the band's manager announces our time with Big Thief is running out. Adrianne will put on her backpack and head out into the festival, alone and unguarded. James plans to go for a run around Glanusk Park before showtime. After that, it's back on the bus to an intimate gig at London's Bush Hall, and beyond lies a US and Canadian tour that stretches through the autumn before Big Thief return to Europe early in the new year. Work has already started on the next batch of songs. Adrianne admits that "home is kind of the road" now, but that's essential because Big Thief are a family with a message to spread, and they know that, just like the mountain watching over us, the icy babbling Usk and this whole Earth we inhabit, a band is a fragile, impermanent thing.

"I don't think it would be good for anyone to expect anything," says Adrianne. "There's no way of knowing. I will say that we're constantly working on stuff and writing. There are already lots of new songs since doing *Two Hands* and *U.F.O.F.* and we're really excited about music, so if I had my best guess, I'd say there will be another album, but also we don't know whether this will all exist tomorrow…"



Going Solo

A prolific songwriter since childhood, away from Big Thief Adrianne Lenker has an enchanting catalogue of her own releases, culminating in 2018's stunning *Abyskiss*, somehow sandwiched in-between the releases of *Capacity* and *U.F.O.F.* "I want to archive the songs in their original forms every few years," Lenker said at the time of the album's release of her ever-growing arsenal of material. Originally recorded back home in Minneapolis in 2013 with producer Rob Oesterlin and self-released as an MP3, Lenker's first solo album, *Hours Were The Birds*, was issued on vinyl for the first time last year by Saddle Creek. Lenker has described the record, written after she arrived in New York City and was sleeping in a warehouse, as "basically just like a live solo show."

The Big Thief family huddle (from l to r): James Krivchenia, Max Oleartchik, Adrianne Lenker and Buck Meek

[PIAS]

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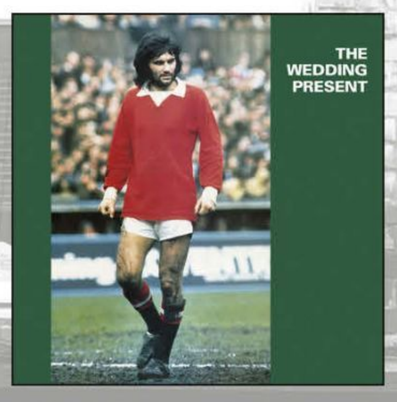

THE WEDDING PRESENT

GEORGE BEST

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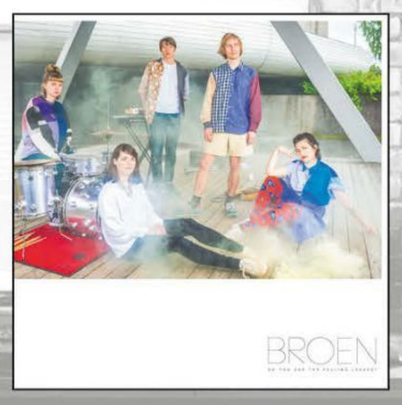

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THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE -

THE FIRST RECORDINGS

Beggars Banquet

ANGEL OLSEN

ALL MIRRORS

Jagjaguwar

GARY NUMAN

REPLICAS -

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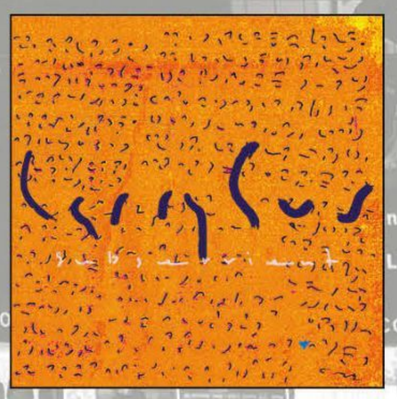

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Talkin' New York

A key figure in the Big Apple's musical re-awakening around the turn of the century, former Moldy Peach Adam Green has since branched out into a whole range of creative projects. **Daniel Dylan Wray** catches up with the genre-agnostic innovator

"I've got my little finger in many pies," says Adam Green with more than a touch of understatement. The singer was once more commonly associated with the New York anti-folk movement as a member of the part-punk part-twee outfit Moldy Peaches, singing songs about crack cocaine one minute and bunny rabbits the next. Or for his rich baroque pop solo albums that followed, such as *Friends Of Mine* and *Gemstones*, during an era when he'd frequently be seen out on the town with the likes of The Strokes and The Libertines.

These days, Green falls much less neatly into a single scene, style or even an art form. In recent years, he's been a filmmaker, directing *The Wrong Ferrari* before directing and starring in a feature-length remake of *Aladdin*, made with papier-mâché sets and co-starring Alia Shawkat, Natasha Lyonne, Jack Dishel, Macaulay Culkin and Nicole LaLiberte. Then there have been various art shows and exhibitions all over the world. Musically, Green has been making records pretty consistently but usually as an accompaniment to other projects, such as the *Aladdin* soundtrack. Green hasn't actually released a straight-up solo record in a conventional sense since 2010 and his latest, *Engine Of Paradise*, is an accompanying album to a graphic novel he's made (called *War And Paradise*).

Green has now entered into a period of his artistic life where he's exploring wider and more complete concepts. "I think it started when I did my own version of *Aladdin* and it had a soundtrack that I did for it," he says. "So there's this idea I've had for a while of trying to make total artworks. Artworks that involve my writing, drawing, human presence, singing, music and painting. A world where I make a universe and set the story inside of that. It's almost like an interior landscape and the characters are various aspects of my subconscious, ego or personality. It's like I set myself on a mission of a myth I'm working on and then I negotiate that myth over a few years and then make a total artwork about it."

The 152-page book is, in Green's words, "a satirical war epic about the clash of humans with machines, the meeting of spirituality with singularity, and the bidirectional relationship between life and the afterlife." The accompanying album explores similar themes. While both are released physically, they can also both be downloaded for free from Green's website.

The book, illustrated by friends Toby Goodshank and Tom Bayne, was initially a compromise, however. "I wanted to make a big papier-mâché war film," he says. "But it's hard to get funding for that kind of thing. I had spent a couple of years writing a script and was really inspired by the director Alejandro Jodorowsky. He was my introduction to this idea of big total artworks

with things like *The Holy Mountain*. He's made 20 graphic novels or something. I suspect for movies that he couldn't make."

As creative an endeavour as his visual and musical recreation of *Aladdin* was, a box office smash it was not. "*Aladdin* lost loads of money, so nobody is interested in participating in a sequel to a huge money pit. I couldn't even look at anyone straight in the face and tell them anything other than this film would lose a tonne of money for them. I didn't want to lie about it. But *War And Paradise* gave me something to do that I'd never done before. I made a movie before and did that last time, so in a way it's like doing something new. So now I'm in a position to have a soundtrack to a comic book rather than a film."

THE SHIFTING WORLD

Musically, the album finds Green in fine form. With that voice as rich, warm and embracing as ever. Sweeping strings wrap around his voice, and the short songs are punctuated by gentle yet piercing drum shuffles. The deeply warm sound that emanates from the record is down to producer Loren Humphrey and his obsession to recreate the studio that Serge Gainsbourg used when making *Histoire de Melody Nelson*, which essentially means this record was recorded with all the same gear in a mirrored environment.

"He's obsessed with that *Melody Nelson* record," Green says. "He was studying photos and trying to figure out what headphones and mics were used, everything that was used to make that record. He had studied all these things to make this perfect version of a recording space, and when you record there it does sound like a British studio from the 1960s, it sounds like *Abbey Road* or something. He just knows how to do it and it's very special, it's cool to work with someone who cares so much about how everything sounds."

The album, like many of Green's projects over the years, also features some familiar and fairly famous contributors. This time, Florence Welch, Foxygen's Jonathan Rado, and MGMT touring member James Richardson. For him, it's not about scooping big names to work with but more an extension of his friendship group. "Having a community and real people, I think, is important," he says of his collaborations. "Even having human relationships, I think, is an antidote to countering some of the existential loneliness that's going around."

The fez-wearing Green wrote and starred in *Aladdin* – it lost loads of money according to its author

Technology and the shifting world we are living in are themes explored across the album and the book, and given that he's just released an entirely analogue recorded album alongside a graphic novel on the back of a papier-mâché film, is Green a physical artist trapped in a digital world? "I'm not entirely analogue," he suggests. "I made *The Wrong Ferrari* on an iPhone. I made this record analogue, but that was just for fun – every other record has been done digitally. I'm attracted to a wooden aesthetic, but maybe that's because part of my fantasy is rooted in being a romantic troubadour or something."

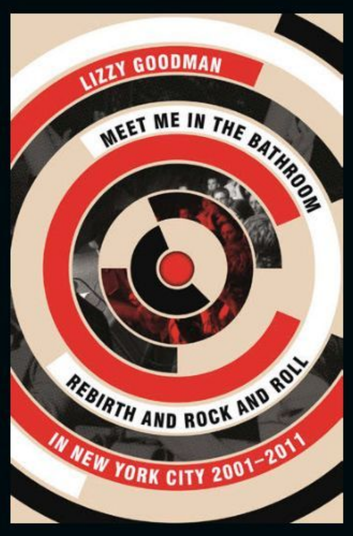
For Green, it is more important to work in a style and approach that is an authentic representation. "I like to work with things that I understand," he says. "Because they are just tools. The thing I want to communicate more than the style is just my thoughts. So I'm looking for any tools to communicate my thoughts and I often at times use tools that I can grasp and understand. I don't want to get way out of my depth and try to impress everyone with how cool and new everything is but not be able to understand all the context clues of the new thing I don't understand. I want to be able to extract the interior landscape of my mind and put that on the outside. I like working pretty uncensored and raw."

He also finds this raw and uncensored approach that he takes across all his art forms can be linked back to his early scrappy punk and anti-folk days. "Playing in punk or anti-folk bands did prepare me to draw expressive lines," he says. "I think I use the same approach to playing guitar in Moldy Peaches as to pressing hard on a crayon or something. Maybe it feels like a similar feeling or action."

So has Green reached the stage as an artist where simply recording a solo album is not enough? Does he need to delve deeper into his worlds and create and control every aspect to

"I think I use the same approach to playing guitar in Moldy Peaches as to pressing hard on a crayon or something..."

XAVI TORRENT/WIREIMAGE/GETTY



Meet Me In The Bathroom **details the rebirth of the New York rock scene in the new millennium**

bring it more fully to life? "I think it's possible that I could just do an album and that would be enough by itself," he offers. "But that hasn't been the case for the last few years. I think I could just make an album and that be satisfying, but I just feel like I go through different phases. It's a push and pull. I'm just going through life looking for what works. Like Leonard Cohen said: 'ring the bells that still can ring'. I'm just looking for that, so if I have a really good idea for a painting I go for it."

So what does a typical day look like for Green then, with all these potential artistic endeavours to jump into? "After I drop the kids off at school, I click into this other mindset and start writing things down in a notepad and it's like a little garden in my mind that I get to dwell in where nobody is talking to me. I can just live in there where there are no rules and I get to do that for a few hours. Where I'm at as an artist, I just feel like I'm really lucky. Sometimes, I wake up and I'm like, I'm so lucky, how did I even get to this point? I guess I don't understand it." Although he admits his life, as grateful as he feels for it, is one that is pretty grounded in the grand scheme of things. "It's a very earth-bound existence," he says. "You couldn't even pretend to Instagram it or something."

STIRRING NOSTALGIA

Last year, Green reissued the self-titled debut Moldy Peaches album after 20 years, and the same year also saw the release of Lizzy Goodman's book *Meet Me In The Bathroom: Rebirth And Rock And Roll In New York City 2001–2011* that featured Green and captured the New York era he came up in. Is he detecting a stirring sense of nostalgia for that era and is he feeling it too? "I'm nostalgic for it. It's my youth," he says. "There was so much great stuff. I feel it too. I read that book and was learning all about the whole LCD Soundsystem scene, which I didn't know a lot about. It's been cool to learn and I'm participating in an art show that's based around that book in New York."

The book itself captures a naive purity of many artists flocking to the city in the late 1990s and early 2000s with hopes and aspirations of working as artists, and it's this element that Green treasures the most. "It was a time in New York that was particularly hospitable to artists and musicians, so even just for that, how can you not romanticise a time in the city when people were so heavily interested in what songs people were writing?"

And how about the New York of today? Does Green believe that spirit and generosity is still present? "There's a friend of mine who has just moved out of the city, who's so pessimistic he just thinks it's gone for good," he says with a slight sigh of resignation. "He believes that it's entered into a new period where it's just no longer welcoming to artists anymore. I'd like to think it's not true and I'm probably going to stick around. So you'll have me, I'll be here."

PETE VOELKER

Green's latest project was initially going to be a war movie made out of papier mache

Adam Green's new album, *Engine Of Paradise*, is out now and available on 30th Century Records

MY LIFE IN VINYL

Geoff Barrow

A creative purist intent on shunning commercial influence, Geoff Barrow is best known for being a member of Portishead, but his output is remarkably varied. He tells **Christopher Barrett** about the 10 albums he has worked on that have had the biggest impact on his career

Drummer, composer, producer and record label boss Geoff Barrow has forged a resolutely independent creative path since the success of Portishead's debut album thrust him head-first into the limelight in 1994.

He grew up in the small coastal town of, funnily enough, Portishead, in a family devoid of musical interest. Barrow's first attempts at making music came as a 12-year-old, when he would drum along to the likes of Hawkwind's lysergic classic *Silver Machine*. His first job, as tea-boy-turned-tape-op at Coach House Studios in Bristol, saw him assist Massive Attack and co-write a track for Neneh Cherry. His love of hip hop and soundtracks would converge to great effect when he teamed up with Beth Gibbons and Adrian Utley to form Portishead.

Having suffered from depression following the music industry baptism of fire that followed the release of *Dummy*, Barrow has spent much of his time since making free-form music with his band BEAK>, working with new or obscure artists and running Invada Records, one of the biggest vinyl soundtrack labels in Europe.

Along the way, he has become an award-winning film score composer, working on major Hollywood movies such as Alex Garland's *Ex Machina* and *Annihilation*, and has also stood behind the production desk for acts including The Coral, The Horrors and Arcade Fire.

Here, Barrow takes time out to talk to *Long Live Vinyl* about his 10 landmark albums from a career that has seen him go from sampling vinyl to recording, producing and selling it.

Portishead
Dummy

Go! Beat 1994

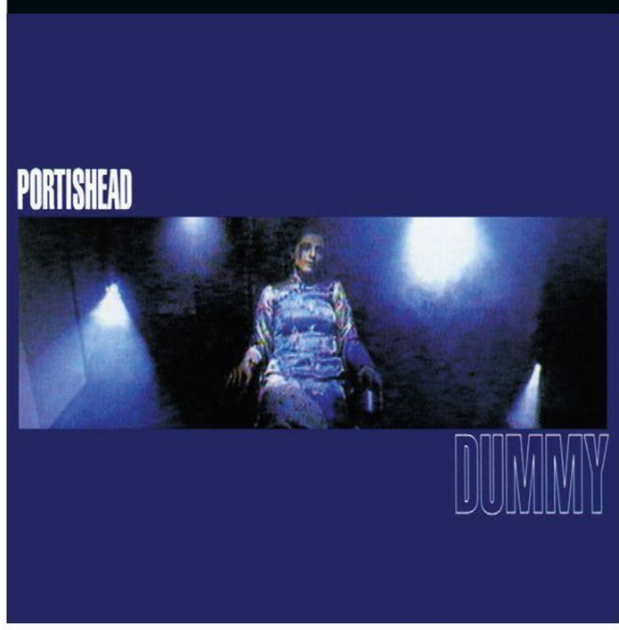
"*Dummy* was incredibly vinyl-based, the whole language of it was vinyl. We took samples that we had made and pressed them on to white label vinyl, and then we would walk around in the garden with them scraping them everywhere just to rough them up a bit until they had the right kind of vibe to resample.

"People say vinyl has warmth, but this was more about vinyl distortion. I have never been careful with records when making music with them, my records are all over the floor, they are tools. We were influenced by New York hip hop, Françoise Hardy and Serge Gainsbourg, and we were all heavily into soundtracks. Adrian introduced me to John Barry's score for *The Ipcress File*, we all loved that kind of sound.

"I was blown away by the reaction to the record. I had no idea people would be into it at all. It wasn't a major record deal, we were signed to an independent, it wasn't that kind of thing. After the initial sense of relief that followed the release of *Dummy,* I entered a world of business and expectation, we had jumped on the train and there was no getting off.

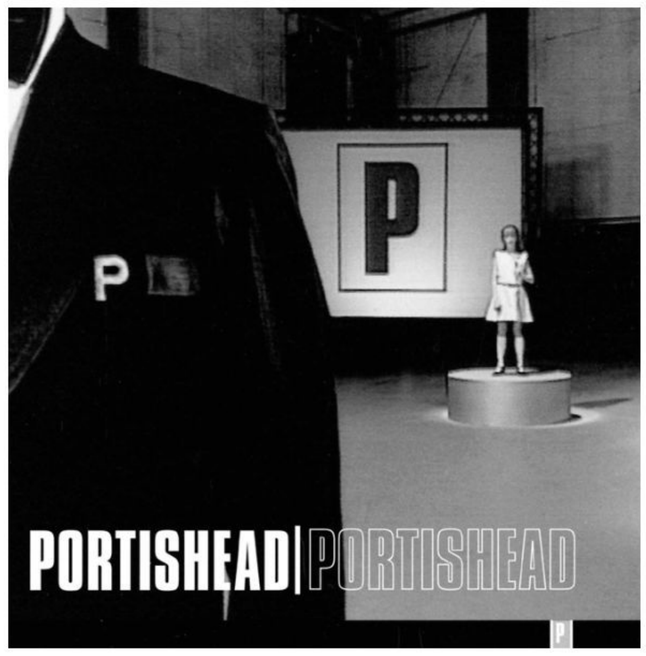
"The record was a pivotal point in my life and shaped the person that I am. After *Dummy,* I wanted to experiment and progress musically.

"It seemed as if everyone had gone out and bought a Rhodes keyboard and put a tremolo on it. Why would we ever want to do that again? We wanted to keep on pushing and evolving."



Portishead
Portishead

Go! Beat 1997



"I have not listened to it for years because making it broke me as a human being. Musically, it is fine, there isn't really anything wrong with it, but the album didn't turn out how I wanted it. We were encouraged to have the wrong belief of what we were as a band, with the whole trip-hop thing. We went to a residential studio for three months and it was a fairly miserable experience for everyone involved. I felt I really wanted to make a drastic change, but we had been touring and I was so knackered I just didn't have the energy to do it.

"There were moments I enjoyed, such as when Chris Cunningham made the video for *Only You*. There were some small victories, technical studio ones, creating a great drum or keyboard sound, but generally it felt like pushing massive boulders uphill. We all felt the same way. Things that should have been easy were really hard."

"I didn't want to make music again on a computer with a sampler"

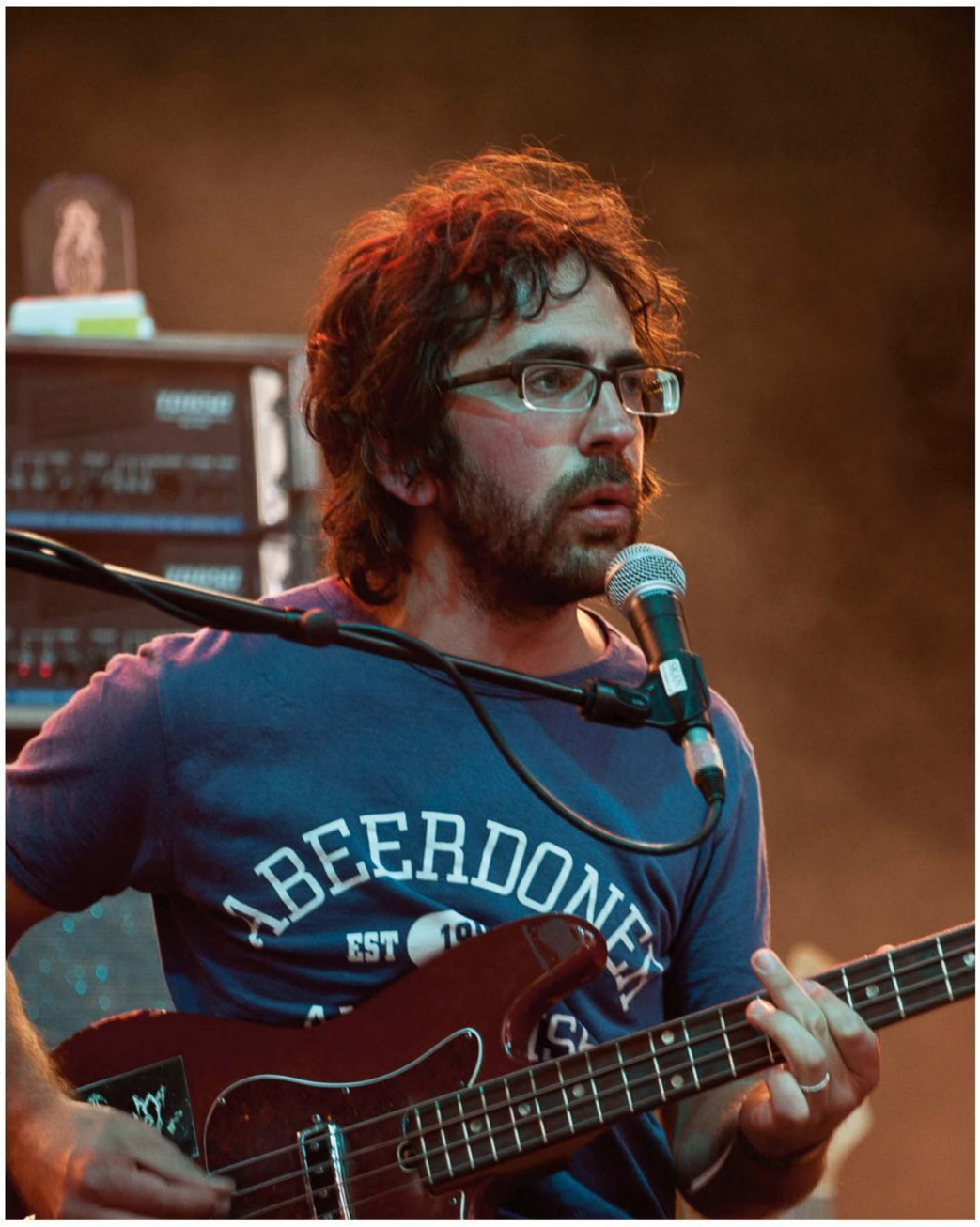
BEAK>
BEAK>>

Invada 2012

"We were having loads of fun playing live around Europe and meeting people, seeing other bands that you would never normally hear of because they come from Serbia or wherever. So we were sucking up influences from all over Europe.

"When we came back to Bristol, we went into our new studio, Invada Studios, and we had this new attitude. We thought we could play rock, but we were shit, we were like a really terrible pub prog band all playing really loud.

"It took us ages just to chill out and start making good music again. It was a much longer process than the debut album and not so natural, it took about 11 months. We started playing quietly and listening to each other again and it grew from there."



BEAK>
Recordings 05/01/09 > 17/01/09

Invada 2009

"It was 2009 and I felt like I had cleansed myself of the music industry. I had no interest in commercial music whatsoever. I had my own label with Fat Paul, Invada, on which we released pretty odd music, and I had learned how to push things from the ground upwards.

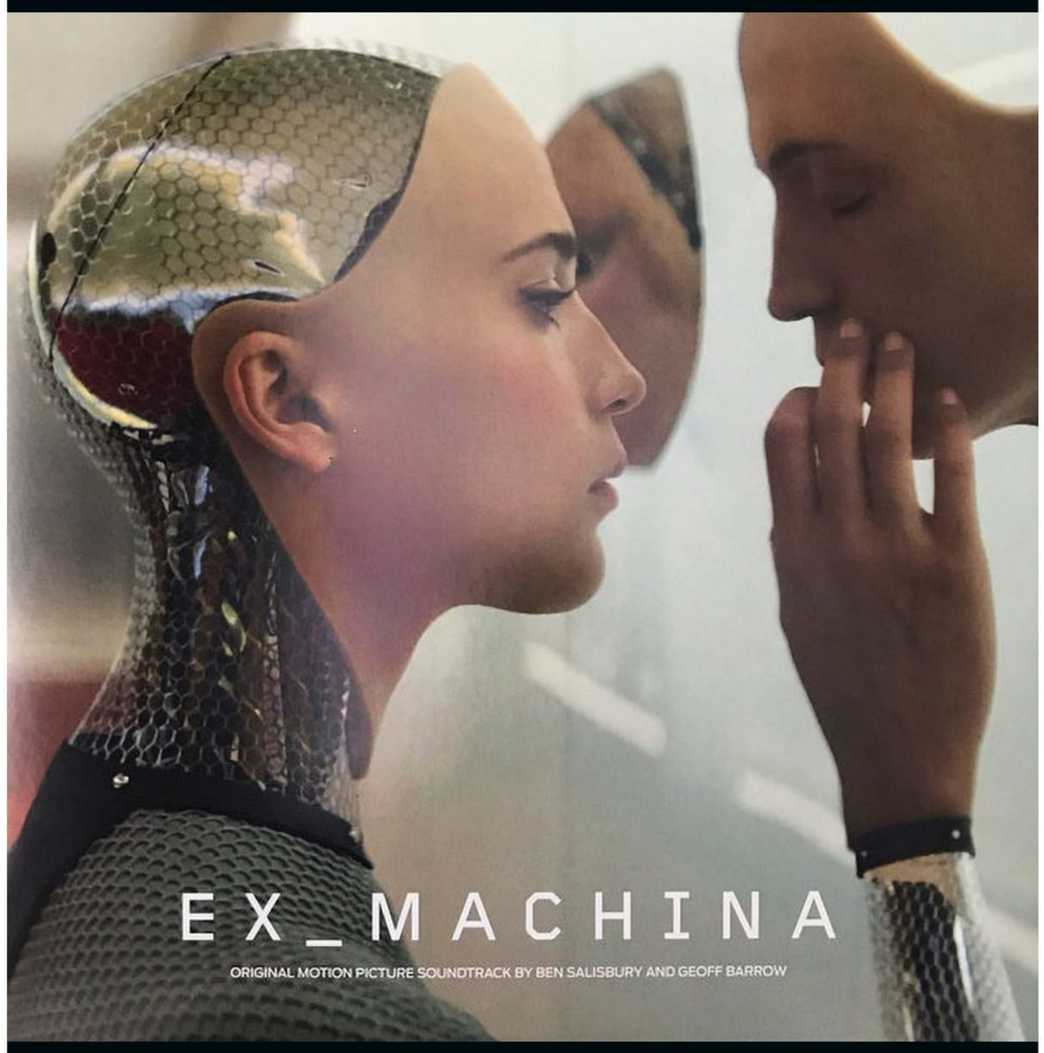
"We had a Christmas party, which involved a session called the Invada Acid Test, where all the artists from Bristol who were signed to the label would come together and play a big jam session.

"Billy [Fuller] played bass and I had set up an organ for Matt [Williams] but, typical him, he turns up with a clarinet. I was playing drums and we had a great time, so I suggested we do it again.

"I booked the studio, we turned up, had a cup of tea, didn't really say much to each other and started playing. The first thing we played turned out to be the first track on the BEAK> album. I just felt completely free, it felt like my past was gone and I was just happy to be playing.

"It was all spontaneous and that became the ethos of the band. The album was recorded over a 12-day session. I don't think we did one overdub, it was just me screaming or mumbling, it didn't matter what is was. It felt like my head had been in a pressure cooker for so many years, and while working on this album it felt like someone had opened the valve and suddenly nothing mattered anymore."

"Experimentation within soundtracks has gone way beyond other genres"



Geoff Barrow & Ben Salisbury
Ex Machina OST

Invada 2015

"I have always been a huge film fan. As a kid, TV themes were everything to me. *Monkey*, *Minder*, *The A-Team*, they were brilliant pieces of instrumental music. Because soundtracks are not based around songs, you can really experiment with them. Experimentation within soundtracks has often gone way beyond anything in other genres, even psychedelia. Jerry Goldsmith's fantastic score for *Planet Of The Apes* had the sound of an orchestra through an echo, it was just amazing.

"I had done some music supervision and written parts for the Banksy film *Exit Through The Gift Shop*, and as a result of that I got approached by Richard Russell at XL Records, who is a friend of Alex Garland.

"I had been playing football with Ben Salisbury in an old men's team for years and I knew he was a composer, we got on well, and had decided to work as a team. A lot of people make music for a film, send it to the music editor and they chop it into the score, but Ben and I write to picture on everything we do.

"The music in *Ex Machina* plays an integral part in the film, there is music all the way through it. We tried to make the music feel as if it was embedded in the story. Alex likes to work like that, we were lucky."

NICK PICKLES/VIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

Before embarking on her singing career, Anika was a political journalist

ANIKA
ANIKA

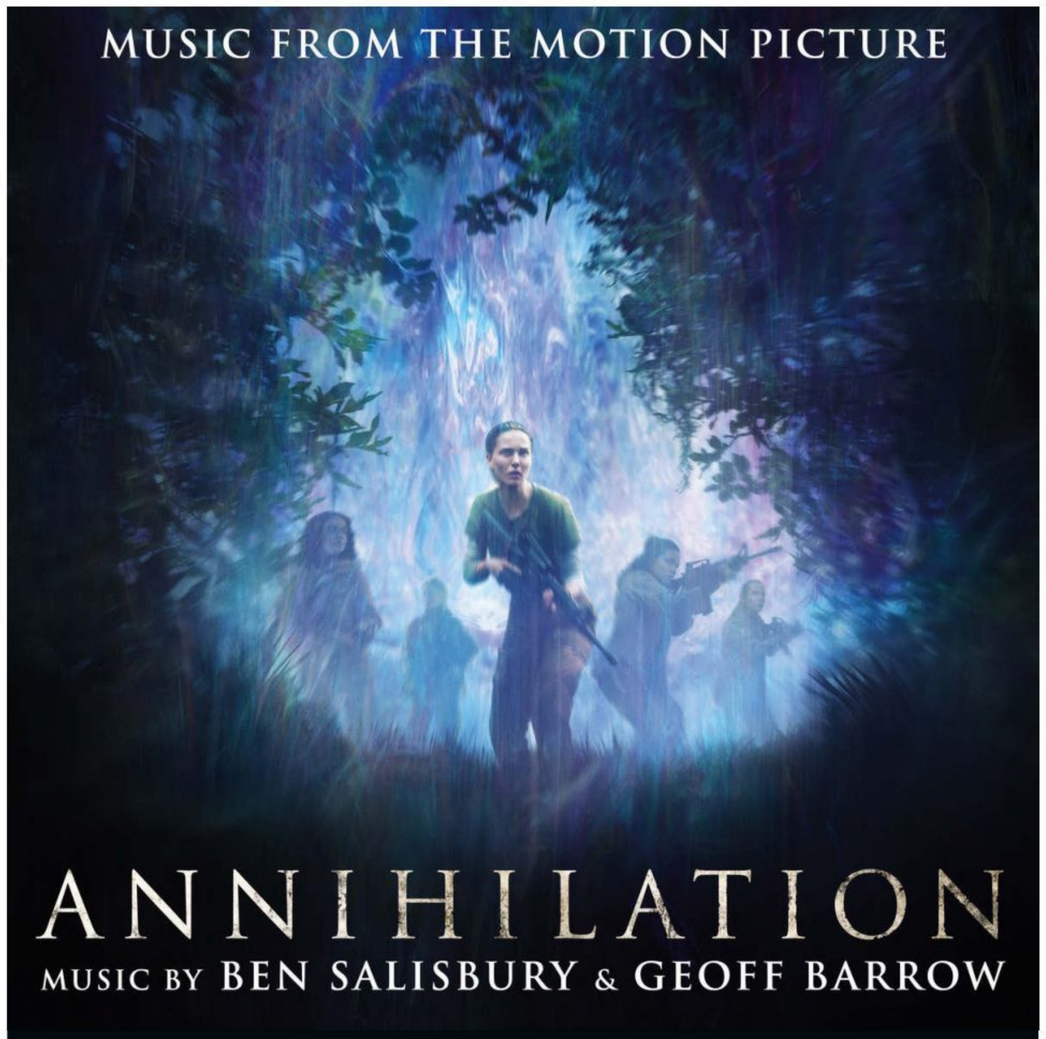
Invada 2010

"BEAK> were in the studio and we wanted to do something with somebody new, forget about making a record and just have a laugh. I spoke to my friend Mig, who runs the Louisiana venue in Bristol and sees a lot of young bands. He suggested Anika. She wasn't really a singer, more of a political journalist who had grown up in Berlin.

"Anika came and jammed with the band. She didn't know who any of us were and had a really brilliant attitude, very individual and strong. She wasn't really a songwriter, so we did loads of covers, with Anika doing weird spoken word vocals. Matt [Williams], who played guitar and keyboards, was being really adventurous and I had bought this really early Mattel drum machine in Berlin, so I plugged that into an amp and played along to it.

"The result was weird post-punk, politically-agitated music. I've got to say that it's one of my favourite records I have ever made."

STEVEN BATSCH



Geoff Barrow & Ben Salisbury
Annihilation Ost

Invada 2018

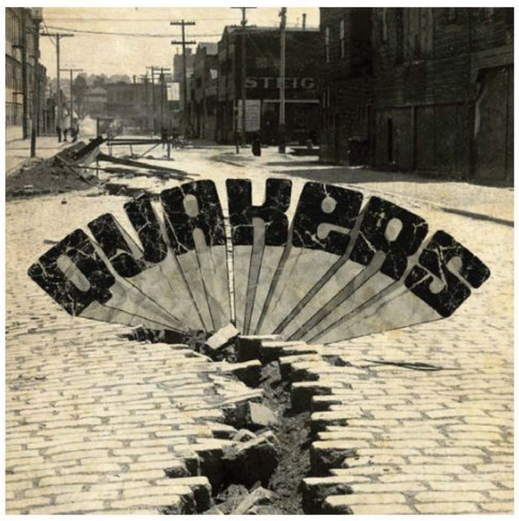
"This is the third score that Ben and I worked on together. The film had an amazing cast and crew. With Alex's films, you are not just seen as a composer, it is very collaborative. He gets a group of people together that he wants to make a film with. Everyone is a lot more involved in the film than just their part. It is an incredible learning experience and it can be hard work as Alex is very demanding, but he is also gracious and giving.

"We had become known for making electronic music soundtracks and so we decided to go organic and record natural instruments and treat the results very differently afterwards. So you get an orchestra and put it through a flange or an echo, something unusual. It was similar to what I used to do with samples, it's just a matter of having the nerve to do it. You can get caught up with the grandeur of things like an orchestra and not want to mess with it. Also, there is the cost involved in recording an orchestra at Air Studios only to then mangle the results."

"We had been known for making electronic music soundtracks and so we decided to go organic"

Quakers
Quakers

Stones Throw Records
2012



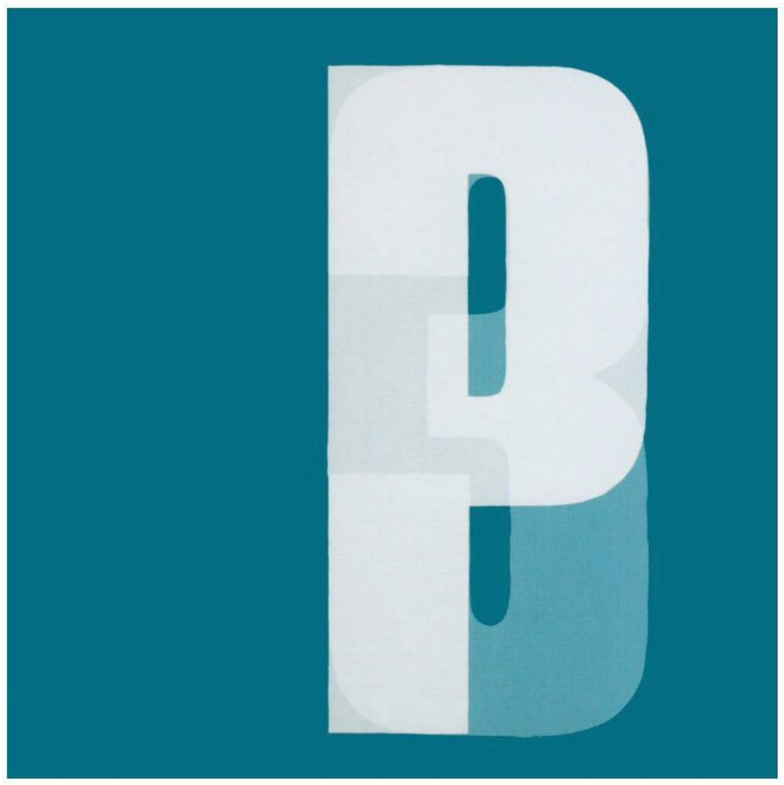
"I was in Australia and my girlfriend introduced me to a guy called Ashley Anderson, aka DJ Katalyst. He is like the Australian DJ Shadow and was doing lots of interesting samples to beats. We took his record around to the labels but there was no interest, so we did it ourselves. We thought, 'let's do a hip hop album'. We spent a lot of time looking for rappers and would invite them to contribute to the album. Some were well known, others weren't, and in the end there were around 30 of them. It wasn't a money thing, no one really made any money out of it, but I had always wanted to do a proper hip hop record."

BEAK>
>>>

Invada 2018

"It was a matter of, 'let's stop jamming and try and write some songs'. The recording process was more traditional and the results sound more traditional than previous albums. It is our most accessible album so far, but that wasn't really intentional. We have always sounded like we are in the back of a cave while someone is hammering some shelves up, but this time it was much more focused. It has been our most successful record so far and unfortunately that can be a gateway back into the industry because people start talking about things like radio, and then something that you have loved for its purity changes shape."

The third Portishead album was a revelatory experience for everyone involved



Portishead
Third

Island 2008

"We hadn't released a record for 10 years and I had quit music for a few years because I had fallen out of love with it, the industry had wiped me out.

"I couldn't really find any music I particularly liked. I had to throw everything away and then re-learn what I was into. I started listening to German experimental music and I got massively influenced by Can. I also got back into heavy rock, doom and stoner stuff.

"I didn't want to make music again on a computer with a sampler. We all wanted to do something different. Beth just wanted to write the best songs she could, and like me Adrian works on a gut feeling as to what works and what doesn't. It went through many different phases, but in the end we were all really happy with it. It was totally different to our previous albums. It felt like we'd moved on.

"The album was recorded at our old studio, State Of Art, in Easton, Bristol, and some recorded in Adrian's house. The beats were programmed at my house and it was mixed at State Of Art. We decided to do it in the place where we first started. We knew *Third* wasn't a record that a major label would understand how to promote, so I took a lead role in that, essentially we managed ourselves."

MARTYN GOODACRE/GETTY IMAGES

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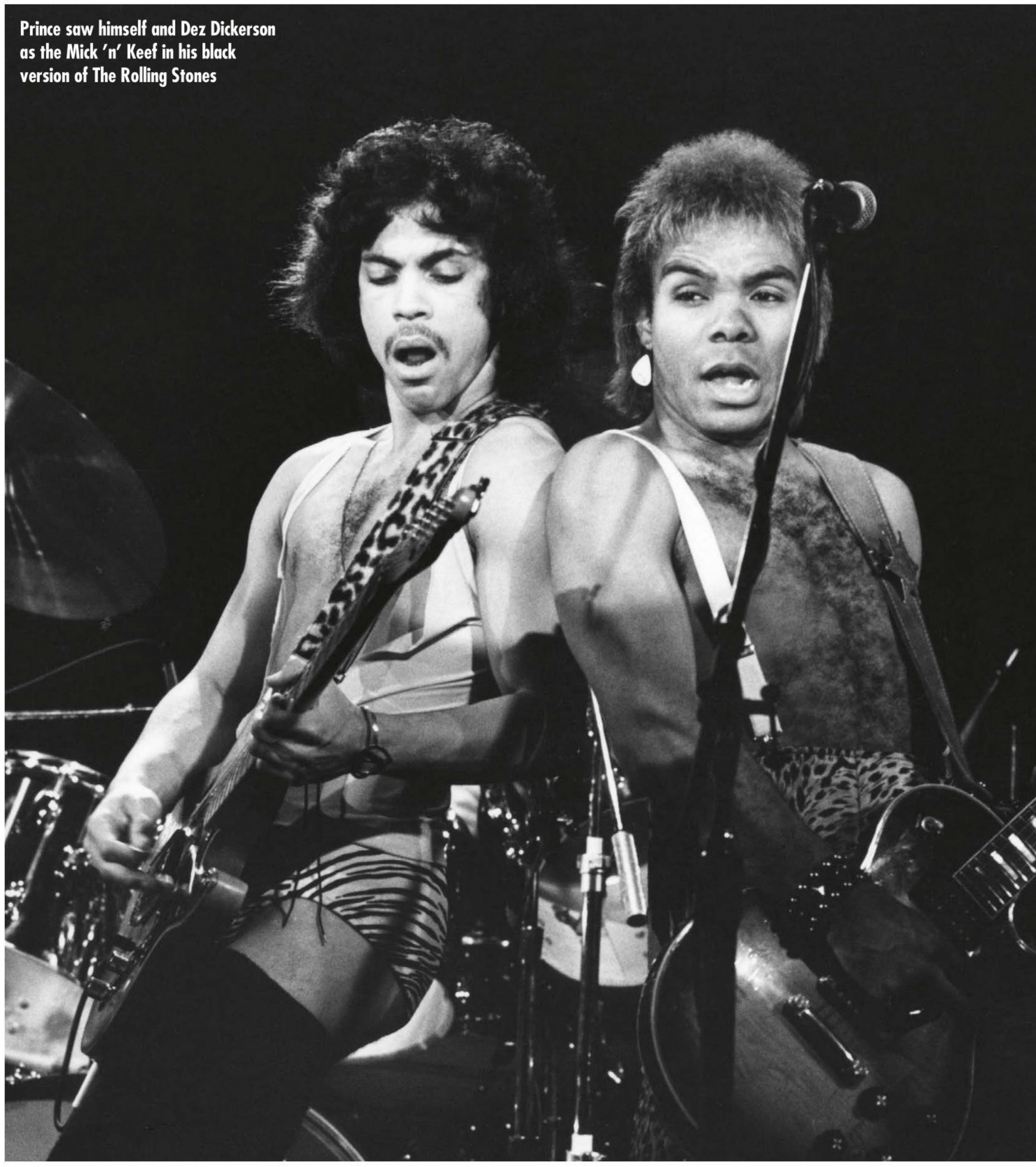
IT'S LIKE 1999...

Prince's genius may have been unstoppable – but it took until his fifth album for the world to catch up. As *1999* becomes the first Prince album to get the full super-deluxe treatment with a 10LP set, **John Earls** speaks to members of The Revolution, a key singer, Prince's estate manager and the guitarist who walked away, to establish how Prince became a global superstar in 70 minutes



Prince saw himself and Dez Dickerson as the Mick 'n' Keef in his black version of The Rolling Stones

For anyone who likes their musical history linear, it'd be fair to say that The Rolling Stones played a key part in Prince going global, even if they weren't aware of it at the time. Prince's two shows supporting the Stones at the Coliseum stadium in Los Angeles in October 1981 have gone down in folklore as "That time Prince got booed offstage". With Prince dressed in a see-through jacket and tiny black briefs, the Stones' audience weren't ready for a future superstar. He lasted just four songs, before the flying detritus got too much and he left during *Jack U Off*. Two nights later, he had to endure it all again.

"The Rolling Stones beatdown was a dark period," recalls Bobby Z, the drummer who had played with Prince since they both left different Minneapolis schools in 1976. "Prince was excited by the punk and New Romantic scene of London, and touring with Rick James honed his funk. Prince tried tying all that together and thought it would translate. The Stones had a big hit with *Miss You* that crossed over into the dance world, and Prince thought that would be the door to try. And then… well, when you play as young musicians, you don't in your wildest nightmares expect to be physically, mentally and audibly ordered off stage with objects and boos coming at you. It was very traumatic – and it happened twice."

"IN ALL MY TIME WITH PRINCE, I RESONATED MOST WITH HIS STATED GOAL WHEN I FIRST JOINED, TO BE A BLACK VERSION OF THE ROLLING STONES"

DEZ DICKERSON

It was especially saddening for Prince, as he was such a huge Stones fan. Guitarist Dez Dickerson, who joined Prince's band in 1979, says: "In all my time with Prince, I resonated most with his stated goal when I first joined, to be a black version of The Rolling Stones. He'd say to me, 'I'm Mick and you're Keith'. That came naturally to me. And, actually, the first two-thirds of that first show with the Stones was stunning and memorable. The part that's become folklore wasn't how that show began. Challenging as it was, it was still one of my favourite experiences with Prince."

Dickerson might have enjoyed trying to win over 94,000 angry Stones fans, but the experience caused Prince to rethink his music altogether. "As dark and frustrating as the Stones experience was, what Prince did as a reaction was to write his way out of it," says Bobby Z. "He created a fork in the road – for the Stones' audience and rock radio, he created *Little Red Corvette*. And in one song, *1999*, Prince encapsulated all the remnants left of the

RICHARD E. AARON/REDFERNS/GETTY

The cover features elements from the sleeve of Prince's previous album, *Controversy*. Namely the eyes and the Rude Boy pin in the '1999'

disco era, which was fading as a result of that stupid 'Disco sucks' era."

Jill Jones befriended Prince when she was a backing singer for Teena Marie, the support act on his *Dirty Mind* tour in 1980. They first worked together on *1999*, when Jones could see Prince determined to finally break through into the mainstream. "When Prince's best friend Andre Cymone left the band as his bassist in 1981, he was on a different mission," Jones explains. "He wanted to move away from the black charts and into the white charts, the pop charts. Accessing that new audience was a very creative time for him. Losing friends like Andre, who have come up with you, when you hire new players it becomes more structured. Prince took his position as boss a lot more seriously."

THAT'S A HIT. WRITE IT!

Lisa Coleman had joined Prince as pianist and keyboardist for *Dirty Mind,* and saw his battle to break through. "Everything was just starting to take form around then," says Coleman. "Prince's management saw that what he was doing could be bigger, that he had the talent of a major artist. They'd sometimes push him to write that hit song – 'That thing you play on the guitar all the time? That's a hit: write it!' They pushed him to that, but he wanted it too, he wanted to be a great artist. At the same time, he was a guerrilla warfare guy who wanted to make his own rules."

Famously prolific, Prince had so many ideas it's no wonder he sometimes had to be reminded which of his ideas were potentially gold. Even *1999* itself was remarkably casual. Jones recalls being woken up by Prince while with him at his house in Minneapolis to record her vocals, with Coleman driving over in the middle of the night having also been summoned. "I'd been asleep, and suddenly Prince was going 'Can you come and sing on this?' like it was urgent," says Jones. "I was in my pyjamas, threw on my fuzzy bunny slippers and made a cup of tea while waiting for Lisa. I guess your voice is still waking up if you're woken up like that and has a different tone, so maybe there was method to his madness!"

As was standard for the pair, Jones and Coleman shared a microphone to record their vocals. "Mine and Lisa's tones worked well together anyway," says Jones. "I knew not to interfere with the main singer's voice, but to add whatever my own tonal abilities were – those were always the best backing vocals." Coleman is full of enthusiasm for Jones' talents, laughing as she recalls the pair recording the song's explosive "paaarty!" finale. "Prince was encouraging me, going

DIY DESIGN

As much of a bandleader as Prince was in his music, the artwork for the cover of *1999* was more collaborative. It featured some early ideas for the *Purple Rain* film.

"Prince was ready for a big change in his work," says Jill Jones. "If you look at the *1999* artwork, it's a collage about his film – today, you might even say it's a mood board. He featured film ideas among the images, like Marilyn Monroe's arm."

Jones reveals Prince had a board in his office, open to anyone who wanted to draw on it or add a design. "Vanity did a lot of drawing, some of which is in the artwork," says Jones. "It all fed in, helped the album come together because everyone was adding to the collage of what it could be, and Prince was definitely inspired by having all these talented people around him."

He added The Revolution's name in backwards writing at the last minute. "Prince was inspired by The Time to have his own musicians become a band," says Jones. "He'd been working on that concept in his mind for some time. Writing their name in the artwork helped The Revolution become manifest."

AUTOMATIC DRUMMING

The synthesised production of *1999* made Prince a pioneer in drum machines, challenging Bobby Z and Prince's engineer Don Batts to keep pace with his ideas.

"Prince got one of, if not the very first, LM1 drum machines," remembers Bobby. "When I first heard it, it was like an automotive worker seeing robots for the first time: I thought it was the end of the world. I got some great advice from Prince's manager, Steve Fargnoli, who told me: 'Well, it's here, so learn how to use it'. In a very short period, Don and I had created a working prototype, which could trigger the guitar or keyboards. Prince would come in, asking, 'How's it going? Is it ready yet?'. You have to remember, there was nothing else out there like it."

By *Purple Rain*, drum machines had improved immeasurably, but for the *1999* tour, Bobby fretted about his homemade tech. "It was very fragile, it double-triggered instruments a lot, and the first drum pads made by Simmons were hard as a rock. You had to hit them with graphite drumsticks to trigger anything. But, lo and behold, Don and I had created this incredible playable electronic drumkit. Playable electronic drums? That was Prince's vision."

'Come on, Lisa, this is your bit!'," she says. "I was a little shy, going [timid voice] 'Ooh, party, woo-hoo'. Jill really has the power. She was kicking my ass, singing all these great licks, and she added the fire we needed. My voice is a lot dreamier."

Coleman may have been dreamier, but she was varied enough to scream "Somebody please help me!" during *D.M.S.R*. "I used to have the greatest horror film scream," she laughs. "Prince would make up scenarios – 'Pretend everybody is attacking you and you're calling for help. OK… go!' *D.M.S.R* was one of those, but my throat is wrecked and I can't do it anymore."

Dickerson sang *1999*'s second verse, and even that didn't take long. "Prince's approach was neat and smart," says the guitarist. "He'd thought through individual singers either singing verses solo or as part of an ensemble or background parts. The way he had me track my vocals left all those options open. Prince didn't give a ton of direction – he wanted me to sing that verse as me, not imitate his guide vocal." Dickerson also sings the pitched-down harmonised vocal at the end. "Not a lot of people necessarily know that's me," he laughs. He was just as quick to record the classic solo on *Little Red Corvette*. Having been invited by Prince to the studio, Dickerson was played the song and asked to add a solo. "It took five or six takes, and Prince compiled the final version from those," he says. "I never thought, 'OK, this solo is going to be memorialised!'. It was just, 'Let me find my space where I can meld with the song'. I wanted to add a statement, without crashing the song itself."

In seeking to make the album appeal to as wide an audience as possible, Prince made his message clear that he was here to dance as well as rock out. "The word 'party' is key to *1999*," says Bobby Z. "He might sound tongue-in-cheek, but 'That's right – party' is an important line, as he's cleaning up the mess left behind by 'Disco sucks'. He's saying, 'It's the end of the world, but we're dancing to Prince and partying'. It was a message of 'This is your moment, so live it up'."

The drummer says the song was inspired by watching on tour the otherwise forgettable 1981 Nostradamus documentary *The Man Who Saw Tomorrow*, voiced by Orson Welles, which predicts the apocalypse will happen in 1999. "All these movies we saw on VHS on the tourbus inspired Prince," says Bobby. "*The Idolmaker*, an amazing film about Fabian, inspired Prince to create The Time. A huge

"THE WORD 'PARTY' IS KEY TO 1999. HE'S SAYING 'IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD, BUT WE'RE DANCING TO PRINCE AND PARTYING'"

BOBBY Z

***1999* was Prince's fifth studio album, and the first to feature his band The Revolution**

ALLEN BEAULIEU

According to band member Bobby Z, the shiny purple trenchcoat was important as it showed that Prince was moving on to the next level

part of creating *Purple Rain* was *Quadrophenia* – the different styles of clothing for mods and rockers fascinated Prince. We were immersed in culture on tour." Maybe so, though Prince wasn't above less artistic pursuits on tour.

"Prince was big on Mattel Intellivision, which was infinitely better than Atari but not marketed so well," states Dickerson. "Prince and I got locked in battles on *Super Pro Football*. We'd have running tournaments, getting to the point where we almost couldn't wait to be done with the show, so we could get back on the bus and resume playing. Prince hated to lose, but it took him two tours to finally beat me. He got crazy about it."

Soaking up films led Prince to ensure the videos for *1999*'s singles could dominate the new MTV. He'd buy books on camera technique and early Hollywood directors such as Louis B Mayer. "Prince saw his strengths in performance, so that's where he aimed his videos," says Jill Jones. "He wasn't going to do the standard 'Guy with a girl in his car' story video, even for *Little Red Corvette*. He rehearsed and rehearsed everyone for the videos, so everyone knew their spot and what to do."

According to Bobby Z, Prince filmed mockumentaries "and all kinds of fun stuff" as soon as he got his first camcorder, but he also began filming band rehearsals. "Filming became one of Prince's tools to get perfection," says Bobby. "You learned nothing got by him, because he watched that stuff 24 hours a day. I learned what my head and hands were doing for every stroke of the drumkit. All this gave him a bug to do more, be more creative with video. We became really good at rehearsing our performances for the videos. The big difficulty was the smoke to make a video look artistic back in those days was oil-based, the type you'd fumigate a house with. It was really difficult to breathe and to navigate. Those videos were incredibly bright, colourful and funny, though I'm still trying to get my make-up off from the *1999* video!"

The strangest of the album's videos was the sexually explicit film for *Automatic*, which was never going to be shown on MTV. "Prince had lost his provocative shock value a little by then," Jones believes. "He wanted to shock everyone a bit. The bondage and domination was art imitating life. *Automatic* was funny because, like *1999*, it was another twisted, creepy girl song from Lisa and I. And I'm crying in it again – it's so strange, Prince always had me crying on records! Prince wanted me to be very mysterious in his videos, like 'Who is this blonde woman showing up in the middle of everything?'"

With the purple trench coat his own take on *Quadrophenia*, Prince perfected his image, too. "That shiny trenchcoat was important," insists Bobby Z. "It showed Prince was moving on to the next level. We were no longer digging through used clothing stores: this was custom-made showbusiness and we were now all spit-shined and glossy for the 1980s."

PRIME MATERIAL

The new 10LP boxset for *1999* shows just how carefully Prince selected the 11 songs for the original album. As well as B-sides and alternative takes, the box features 17 songs recorded at the time, which had never officially been released, spread chronologically across two discs. Michael Howe, the manager of Prince's estate, who compiled the set, explains: "The breadth and depth of what Prince was experimenting with at the time is remarkable. When you listen to the original album, you hear how coherent it is. But some of these other songs are prime material, too."

Howe was Prince's final A&R representative before managing his estate, mentioning *Feel U Up*, LGBTQ anthem *Vagina* and a "vulnerable, playful" alternative take of *International Lover* as personal favourites. Would he have fought to have those on the album if he'd been Prince's A&R in 1982? "If I was Prince's A&R back then, I'd have been very careful about volunteering an opinion in any forceful way on the creative side," he laughs, adding: "I think his decision-making was remarkably sound. There's a couple of songs in the bonus material that are very special, but Prince's overall process can't be questioned."

There's a live album from Detroit and live DVD from Houston in the package, with only one rumoured recording proving elusive: an early version of *Raspberry Beret* apparently made three years before it appeared on *Around The World In A Day*. "I think Prince either wiped the original, or overdubbed so many

"THE REVOLUTION WERE AN ALTERNATE SOCIETY. PRINCE SAW US AS A CULT. HIS RECORDS WERE ALL-INCLUSIVE, MYSTERIOUS, SEXUALLY PROVOCATIVE"

LISA COLEMAN

ALLEN BEAULIEU

elements on the final recording there's no way to pick apart the DNA of what the 1982 version was," Howe posits. "That's a bummer, as I'd certainly love to hear the 1982 version and share it with the world."

THREE-RINGED CIRCUS

At the same time as recording *1999*, Prince was writing and producing the debut albums by The Time and Vanity 6. "Prince was becoming the master of his own three-ringed circus," explains Bobby Z. "Seeing them together was like you were being attacked by an army from Minneapolis, but really it was all this one guy." Coleman adds: "The character Morris Day plays in The Time was a facet of Prince's personality. He'd fool around, look down his nose the way Morris does… It was very funny, but a part of his personality Prince decided he couldn't use in his own work. Prince was great at distilling his personality, breaking apart pieces of himself and giving them to others so he could focus on what he wanted in his own music."

That was the intention, but when it came to touring *1999* with The Time and Vanity 6 as support, Prince was in danger of being overshadowed by his proteges. "Prince loved The Time's camaraderie, which Prince's band didn't have at that point," Jones remembers. "Their rehearsals were fun and hilarious, whereas Prince's were structured, as he was the boss." Prince watched The Time every night. "Prince created a competitive environment between his bands," says Jones.

"He left frustrated with his own band more often than with The Time. They had a magnetism and they all knew each other's movements. I don't recall many times when Prince's band would watch The Time, and that was a big tell – he'd come back from seeing them and try to pump up his own band. But The Time were blazing. They burned Prince many nights on tour, and he knew it." Prince would sometimes party after a show, but he'd watch all three acts' performances back on video early in the morning. "He'd either give you notes or recreate something in soundcheck he wanted to try out in the show that night," says Jones. "It kept people on their toes. That rivalry and competition was good for him." It kept Prince on top, but Bobby Z couldn't keep up, admitting: "I was on my bunk on the bus at 4am and all of a sudden I'd see Prince's face in my bunk, saying 'You missed a cymbal on something'. I went to his management and said, 'Prince is a rock star now. Will you please get him his own bus?' He was a little overwhelming, but he loved to come back and be with us."

Bobby Z likens The Time to Frankenstein's monster, saying: "Prince wanted us to kick their ass, but The Time were serious too and they got so good they attacked him."

Warner is reissuing Prince's fifth studio album, *1999*, in November, including a super deluxe 10LP+DVD set, which features 35 previously unreleased tracks

MORE ORIGINALS

Estate manager Michael Howe confirms *1999* will be followed by more super deluxe editions of other Prince albums. Further volumes of *Originals*, the brilliant compilation of Prince's previously-unreleased versions of songs he gave to other artists, will also happen. "There could be other variations on that theme," Howe reveals. "Whether it's a Prince covers album or a body of work that's not Prince proper but has his DNA and is thematically linked, we'll see."

As with the welter of extra songs on *1999*, further expanded releases will feature all of Prince's material from the album period. "We try to include everything we can that paints the most complete picture of that period," says Howe.

Could that include revisiting *Purple Rain*? The 2015 reissue released while Prince was alive was nowhere near as extensive as the new *1999* set. "I can't get into specifics on *Purple Rain*," Howe admits. "But if you're asking for my opinion, I do think there's a much more complete album, and it should be rendered in a much more complete way."

According to Coleman, Prince's manager felt The Time confused Prince's appeal. "You don't want to dilute the message," she says. "The Time were created to be the funkiest band ever, so what did that make the funk Prince played? I can see the sense of keeping them apart from Prince now, but at the time we were young kids and we just felt, 'Awww! How come we can't play with the kids next door anymore?'"

The *1999* tour was Dickerson's farewell. He missed the more freeform nature of Prince's early shows. He'd also discussed getting Prince's help to go solo when the time was right, rejecting an appeal to stick around for three more years to record and tour what would become *Purple Rain*. "People will often ask, 'How could you walk away from the fame and money?'" says Dickerson. "But if you've got contextual blues, none of that matters. My epiphany was, 'I wouldn't want to be around me right now, and I'm not doing my friend any favours by staying in his band when I'm just miserable'. It was time to go. I was able to make sure I gave my best at the shows, but it became more of a struggle. Prince and I had conversations about finding a way through, but it had become too slick for me."

At least Prince had the perfect solution: he'd snuck the name of The Revolution onto *1999*'s artwork in backwards writing and knew exactly how to develop them. "The Revolution were an alternate society," recalls Coleman. "We were these hippy purple people. Prince saw us as a cult, an alternative movement. His records were all-inclusive, mysterious, sexually provocative. He stirred people up and connected to a whole lot of people who needed that." It meant the purple reign was just beginning… ●

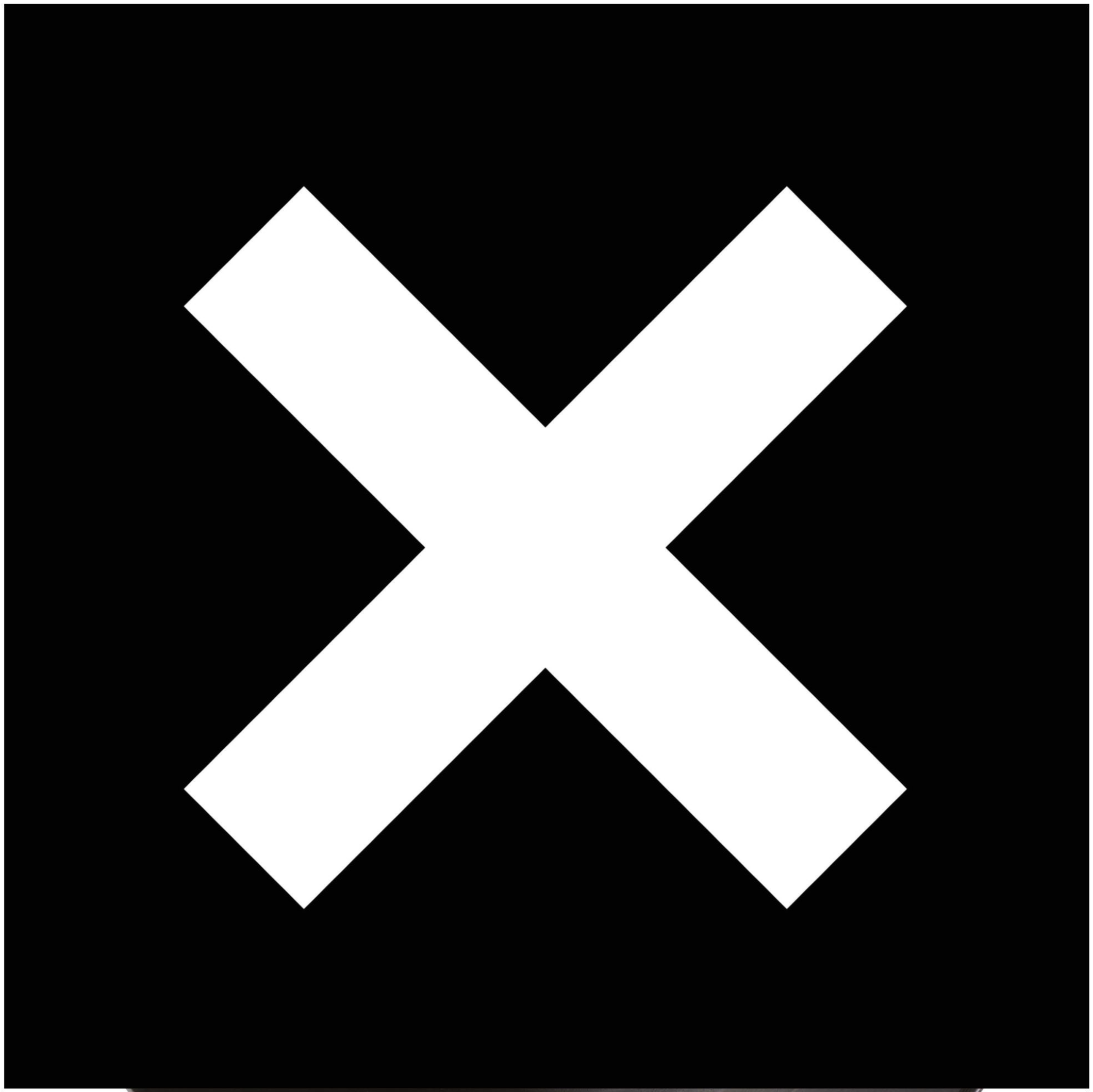
Lisa Coleman's album Collage is out now

Classic Album

The xx

xx

At the end of a decade characterised by the riotous and hedonistic energy of youth, The xx's fragile self-titled debut instead explored hushed empty space and vulnerability. Seeping into the collective consciousness of a city coming down from the garage-rock revival and financial ruin, **Sam Willis** explains how it helped to define the following 10 years in pop



CLASSIC ALBUM 19 XX

The year 2009 was, in many ways, a year of flux for Britain. The shattering impact of the 2008 financial crash had brought the country to its knees. Culturally, the year also signalled the end of a near decade-long dynasty in British music.

2009 marked the death knell of the garage-rock and post-punk revivals, which had been mainstays in London and beyond since the pan-Atlantic explosion of The Strokes and White Stripes in 2001. In the shallows of this musical sea-change, landfill indie had subsided to the juggernaut of American pop.

However, in the deep, twilight waters of this shift, a hushed and musically subversive album emerged which would provide the bedrock for much of pop's forthcoming humanisation; The xx's *xx*.

Meeting for the first time in a sandpit as toddlers, Romy Madley Croft and Oliver Sim (guitarist/vocals and bass/vocals respectively) forged a kinship over two decades, which proved to be definitive for the album's almost immediate and lasting impact.

The unity first discovered in infancy would continue during their time at Putney's Elliott School, a co-ed comprehensive which, by chance, became a fertile breeding ground of music talent, with alumni including The Maccabees, Hot Chip, Four Tet and Burial. Their friendship became a creative collaboration with ex-bandmate Baria Qureshi in the final years of compulsory education.

Although already school mates, Jamie Smith, aka Jamie xx, would join a year later in 2006 as their producer and beat-maker after being introduced by Young Turks label boss Caius Pawson. Excited by the then teenagers' talent, Young Turks installed a purpose-built studio for the band in the garage of XL Records in Ladbroke Grove, gave them the keys and, crucially, time to explore their sound.

"We worked with Diplo, Kwes and a few others," Jamie xx told *Dummy*'s Ruth Saxelby on the early incarnations of their sound. "We learnt different things from each producer, but the results all sounded like a collaboration rather than us. So, eventually, we just decided to do it with me. It gave us a lot of freedom because we could just do it in the XL studio. They gave us the keys, so I was going in every night."

Written, recorded and produced exclusively in the long hours of night, the resulting sound of Romy, Oliver and Jamie's nocturnal efforts was as eerie as it was post-coital, and almost peerlessly captured the spirit of London at dusk in 2009. As Skream, the early and influential dubstep pioneer, put it, the sound was "like Burial but with a face". Just like their Elliott School compatriot, who had released one of the most celebrated UK garage and dubstep albums of the decade with *Untrue* two years before, The xx managed to capture the

The xx (l to r): Jamie xx, Oliver Sim, Baria Qureshi and Romy Madley Croft

ROGER KISBY/GETTY IMAGES

The band was formed when Croft and Sim met at school, with Smith joining a year later

disquieting sound of twilight London. Unlike Burial, however, they illuminated their work with tender questions of love and the human experience.

"There's nobody else around, you're not going to get disturbed," Romy told *Dummy* about working at night. "It's just more peaceful. You know when you get pushed to that level of being half awake, half asleep? I just come up with more things. It's when I become creative."

EMPTY SPACE

The debut record purveyed an atmospheric serenity defined as much by what was not present as what was. In many ways, it was one of the first albums to truly lay bare the influential benefits of the iPod shuffle. This new generation had the ability to listen to "some Billie Holiday, which turns into some spoken-word piece, followed up by Beyonce," as Oliver explained in *Clash*, and it was a driving force for the breadth of influence packed densely into 11 tracks. From Interpol, Young Marble Giants, The Cure and Cocteau Twins to Beyonce, Aaliyah, Timbaland and UK garage, there are spectres of rich music understanding everywhere.

What was most surprising for a group of 20-year-olds, however, was the deft utility of empty space. The album distilled all of those disparate entities into a body of work that stood

"Everyone started saying how much space there was in the songs"
JAMIE XX

MARC BROUSSELY/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

The songs

CORE PERSONNEL

Jamie xx Beats, MPC
Oliver Sim Bass, vocals
Romy Madley Croft Guitar, vocals
Baria Qureshi Keyboard, guitar

MAIN PRODUCTION CREDITS

Jamie xx

RECORDED

December 2008 to April 2009
XL in-house studio

RELEASED

14 August 2009

1 Intro

Racking up well over 309,000 streams on Spotify, *Intro* is by far The xx's most popular and iconic track; unusual for an instrumental album opener. As minimalist and disembodied as it is affecting and epic, the borderline trip-hop track coils through muted guitars, haunting organs and spectral 'aaahs', which converge to create an authoritative introductory statement of the band's sound.

Intro fast became a favourite of advertising directors and television music coordinators. With dizzying speed, the track was popping up on TVs everywhere, including as a soundtrack to capture the bewildered state of British politics for a 2010 general election advert.

2 VCR

VCR is the first in a quartet of tracks that illustrate the sonic, lyrical and thematic tropes of *xx* most succinctly. Xylophones at the outset seep into one of the desolate, single-string guitar lines that are synonymous with the record. Mining themes of tender connectivity, love and nostalgia, Romy and Oliver breathe "Watch things on VCR, with me and talk about big love/ I think we're superstars, you think we are the best thing/ But you, you just know, you just do" in the chorus. Written when they were 15, *VCR* is the oldest track on the album and played live in exactly the same way as the very first demo was recorded.

3 Crystalised

Crystalised was The xx's debut single, released just shy of four months before the album with a video that saw the band, including, for the only time, Baria Qureshi, performing in front of projected images of swirling clouds, migrating birds and meteor showers.

As a first glimpse of the band, the track immediately creates a stunning sense of self. There's lonely guitars, Jamie's fluttering hands on his sample machine and the characteristic call and response between Romy and Oliver. Although the lyrics drip with romantic affection, the relationship portrayed is largely imagined and based upon a "huge interest in life, and looking at other people's relationships," as Oliver told *The New Yorker*'s John Colapinto.

The songs
CONTINUED

4 Islands
Peaking at number 34 and 3 of the UK Singles Chart and UK Indie Chart respectively, *Islands* is The xx's highest chart-ranking track and saw the band at the height of their nascent ascendency.

Showing just how far this song and album's tendrils reach, *Islands* was, quite bizarrely, covered by Colombian pop star Shakira for her ninth studio album *Sale El Sol* and then performed live on Glastonbury's Pyramid Stage by the singer the evening after The xx headlined The Park in 2010. The Saam Farahmand directed music video captured the claustrophobia and repetition of the track utilising a litany of tracking shots – all of which differed slightly from the last.

5 Heart Skipped A Beat
Before Romy, Oliver and Baria began working with Jamie as their in-house producer, they worked with a catalogue of other producers, from Diplo to Kwes, and *Heart Skipped A Beat* was the track which was experimented with most.

Of all the songs on the record, *Heart Skipped A Beat* has the most incarnations, with the instrumental breakdown between the bridge and third verse proving to be ripe for experimentation. In the end, Jamie's stripped back production helped tie the track into the personality of the album.

6 Fantasy
Gently cleaving the album in two, *Fantasy* is a largely instrumental track, with Oliver whispering fantasies of lovers reuniting in summer for only a proportion of the 2 minutes 38 seconds running time. The inspiration for the track came during a break from the studio when the band found themselves being rattled by sound systems at Notting Hill Carnival. The resulting obsession with sub bass was the seed for an ethereal track which transforms from the low rumbling of thunderous bass to a ringing guitar line; all of which acts as a prelude to the following song.

7 Shelter
"Can I make it better, with the lights turned on?" was a line in *Shelter* that convinced many that much of the subtext of *xx* was about sexual relationships, something that Romy firmly denied with a rebuttal to Alexis Petridis of *The Guardian,* saying: "We were writing these songs when we were 17... I don't think we were sitting down and overtly being like, 'This song is about my sex life'." The track, sung by Romy without Oliver for the only time on the record, is regularly given a techno remix by Jamie when performed live.

completely independent, crafted by young artists bold and brave enough to take things out rather than putting them in. "It started out as non-intentional, but then everyone started saying how much space there was in the songs," Jamie told *Dummy*. "We started to notice that and deliberately took out things in the songs that weren't necessary."

Wielding austerity of sound for a city reeling from financial ruin, Romy and Oliver's unsheltered lyrics provided a rich vein of romantic vulnerability, equivocation and whispered suspense that harmonised with a generation disoriented by a much gloomier Britain and bored by the absolutism of the former teen-music episodes.

Over the course of 38 minutes, via tracks such as *Crystalised*, *Islands* and *Heart Skipped A Beat* in particular, Romy and Oliver's lyrical interplay became one of the defining and most intriguing touchstones of the album. Lines like "I've been down on my knees/ and you just keep on getting closer", "Sometimes I still need you" and "I am yours now/ So now I don't ever have to leave" purred between the two drew assumptions that they were more than just friends, but the reality is far more indicative of the ambiguity of the record.

NOTHING IS CERTAIN
Utilising iChat while writing in the dead of night, Oliver would craft his lines and share them with Romy and vice versa until they had the basic form of a song. "What she sings, she's written and what I've written, I sing," Oliver told *Dummy* and, intriguingly, neither ever told each other who or what was being projected through the lyrics; they simply collaged them together. This montaging process leaves the album dripping with questions and tension and made it all the more relatable, regardless of gender or sexuality. "We never say 'him' or 'her'," Romy told *Dazed* on this process. "It's always just 'you'."

The communion between a sound that was as densely packed in with influence as it was sparse, and songs that seemed to tap into feelings of angst and intimacy simultaneously, provided an album full of white space. Just like a photo, it becomes the audience who make sense of the vacuum. When nothing is certain and isn't required to be, that void can be validated and celebrated and the whispered hush is made full in the ears of the listener.

When *xx* finally arrived in 2009, it did so fully formed and in the same muted way that it was created. There was little in the way of hype, the songs did the talking for themselves.

The band's eponymous debut album claimed the Mercury Prize in 2010

BRIAN RASIC/GETTY IMAGES

In fact, it was only after the record won the Mercury Prize that it became a bona fide commercial success. Deft marketing from Young Turks, however, placed the now iconic white 'x' on a black background in the right places and with the same silent impact as the album. Halfway through raucous episodes of *Skins*, the logo would appear for 10 seconds in absolute silence to slice through the trite visions of 'youth culture' that populated the show. Nothing else needed to be said and the resulting message of that simplicity echoed for a series of artists who arrived during the following decade.

As natives of the South London dubstep heartlands, The xx, and particularly Jamie xx, always exhibited an affinity for the capital's electronic music tradition. The sparse and gloomy production championed by Jamie cut through consistently. That humanisation of the capital's underground electronic music proved to be potent and went on to provide an underpinning substructure for some of the most celebrated London artists in the years following.

Mercury and Ivor Novello winning James Blake, whose work also created ballads from the in vogue electronica emanating from South London, openly admits that *xx* "warmed the seat" for his own ascendency.

"The xx set the precedent and I set the precedent further, and the music world has bent to that sound," Blake told *The Guardian* modestly in 2016. "It's like the opposite of punk, isn't it? I got them all to shut up… I've subdued a generation."

The music world really has bent to that sound. Between James Blake and Jamie xx, they have either directly worked with or been sampled by the likes of Drake, Beyonce, Rihanna, Young Thug, Frank Ocean, Kendrick Lamar, Jay-Z, Bon Iver, Travis Scott, Andre 3000, Stevie Wonder, The LSO, RZA and Brian Eno. The list is endless, disparate and, crucially, still growing today. Through extensive remixing, Jamie xx has even bent others' music to his sound. From London Grammar and FKA Twigs through to Jessie Ware, Sampha and The Weeknd, the diarchy of The xx and James Blake have left their fingerprints on some of the most exciting music to emanate from either side of the Atlantic.

The xx's minimal, atmospheric sonics have subtly influenced pop music for the past decade

Starting with their seminal debut, The xx sparked a musical upheaval which didn't come kicking and screaming through the front door, but knocked politely, brought a bouquet of wilting black dahlias and asked if it could please stay for dinner. The subversion of their sound can be felt in the still-developing future R&B scenes today. You could argue that they had a similar ethos to punk – all of the youthful

"We learnt different things from each producer, but the results all sounded like collaboration rather than us"
JAMIE XX

GARY WOLSTENHOLME/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES ANDY SHEPPARD/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

The songs
CONTINUED

8 Basic Space
Within *xx*, morose, often morbid, imagery is utilised to describe the depth of love felt between the imagined lovers portrayed in the song. Whether it's the process of turning a loved one's ashes into diamonds (which inspired the song *Crystalised*) or wanting to "drown whenever you leave" in *Shelter*, death and love consistently find themselves side by side. In *Basic Space*, Romy and Oliver discuss getting into "pools of boiling wax" to seal the love of their protagonists and taking each other piece by piece: "Neck, chest, waist to floor/ Easy to take, you could take me in fours".

9 Infinity
Infinity was the last track recorded for the album and, fittingly, is about the breakdown of a relationship while still tenderly wishing for infinity. In the opening verse, Oliver sings "Had I seen it in your eyes/ There'd have been no try after try/ Your leaving had no goodbye/ Had I just seen one in your eyes". Crescendoing at the outro, Romy and Oliver purr between them the duality of wanting to give up on a lost relationship and not being able to with the call and response refrain "Give it up/ Can't give it up".

10 Night Time
With *xx* being written, recorded and produced in the XL studio exclusively at night, there's little surprise that the tracks reflect that twilight creativity, and none more so than *Night Time*. As well as distilling the smokey, ethereal and sunless personality of the band, the track features a decelerated garage-influenced breakdown after the first chorus: the exact type of sonic feature that saw them likened to Burial and why they became such good bedfellows with the UK's electronic music community. *Night Time* was given a makeover by 80s disco stalwart Greg Wilson, as well as a deep house and garage reimagining from Synchro.

11 Stars
Talking to Apple Music's Matt Wilkinson in celebration of the album's 10-year anniversary, Oliver described the opening line of *Stars* as his favourite lyric on the record, saying: "'I can give it up on the first date' is just pure teenage desperation and obsessiveness, which was just me in that stage". Written when the band were only 16, the track is one of the oldest on the record and is described as like reading back through an old diary and seeing images of the "love obsessed teenagers we were".

Romy Madley Croft has written songs with Dua Lipa and Mark Ronson

innovation and distilled self-production, without any of the crass aggression and saliva. As Kanye West reportedly told the band, their music "reminded him of Steve Jobs, who'd taken something as big as the computer and put it into a cell phone".

In 2014, a year before the critically acclaimed debut LP from Jamie, *In Colour,* was released and in between the band's second and third records, The xx played a slew of gigs during a residency at New York's The Armory. The star-studded guestlist included the likes of Jay-Z, Beyonce, Madonna, Blood Orange, Samantha Urbani, Jessie Ware, Ethan Silverman and Sophie Auster. In just five years, the group still in their 20s, had gone from self-producing and writing a record in the dead of night over the internet to performing in front of music, fashion and film's biggest names.

"What she sings, she's written and what I've written, I sing"
OLIVER SIM

The real indicator of *xx*'s success is that it is has managed to provide a path for burgeoning talent to follow. Along with changes in our wider societal conversation on gender and identity, *xx* helped to ignite a tradition in modern pop which celebrates delicacy, vulnerability and lulling empty space. ●

ANDY SHEPPARD/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Chris Bell

I AM THE COSMOS

CAR RECORDS

The former Big Star guitarist died young with only one 45 release to his name. **Glen Bushell** looks back

Wax Facts

CHRIS BELL
I AM THE COSMOS
CAR RECORDS
BLACK
1978

£250-£300

After leaving Big Star, Chris Bell attempted to embark on a solo career. While he recorded a number of tracks that would later appear on a posthumous album in 1992, *I Am The Cosmos* was his only single and was released in 1978, the same year as his death at the age of 27 from a car accident.

I Am The Cosmos is widely regarded as one of the greatest power-pop tracks of all time. It has Bell on vocals and features his former Big Star bandmate Alex Chilton on guitar. Backed up by another excellent Bell track, *You And Your Sister*, it was released by Car records on a black vinyl, wide-centred 7" with black and white labels. The picture sleeve was printed on thin paper with a blue and white design.

Only recognised for its greatness in later years, the single went widely under the radar of collectors for a number of years – and for a long time commanded little value. As time has gone on, it has become a classic track and part of the Big Star legacy, with copies regularly changing hands for between £250 and £300. It is the kind of thing you would pass by on racks, as it doesn't look like anything special, when in reality it is a hidden gem that shouldn't be overlooked.

The single was reissued on Record Store Day in 2018, with the audio remastered and the sleeve featuring extended liner notes by Car Records founder Chris Stamey. This helped, in part, keep the legacy alive of one of the greatest songwriters to never break into the mainstream. ●

THE ESSENTIAL

The Beatles Solo Albums

Theirs was a difficult act to follow, but how did John, Paul, George and Ringo do with the challenge of going it alone? Let **Steve Harnell** be the judge of that

No musicians have ever been presented with a more daunting challenge. What exactly do you do for an encore after being part of the most important and influential pop cultural phenomenon of all time? Over the course of the last 50 years since The Beatles split up in such bitter fashion, the individual parts of the four-headed behemoth that was John, Paul, George and Ringo have served up an extraordinarily diverse collection of solo albums.

In fact, even before the band parted ways, both John and George had begun to fully embrace avant-garde experimentalist music, while Paul has gone on to assemble a singularly individualistic back catalogue that has taken in a classical symphony as well as ambient and electronica, alongside his trademark melodic pop songcraft. Only Ringo – at the peak of his partying powers arguably the most well-connected man in rock, with a bulging address book of A-list collaborators – clung resolutely to a more traditional path, that has frequently referenced the musical styles of his former band.

While they rarely put a foot wrong as Beatles, the wavering quality of the Fab Four's solo efforts has seen the quartet come under fire for failing to live up to their reputations as the pre-eminent pop and rock force of their age.

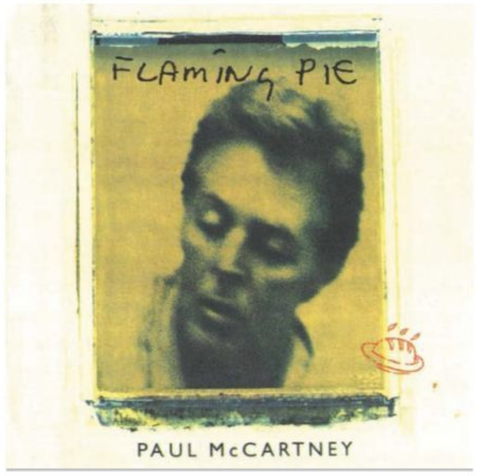
But while only the most rabid of Beatles fans could argue the case for some of their weaker efforts (*Press To Play* anyone?), we have comfortably drawn up a Top 20 of superb solo records by former Beatles that you need to add to your collection. From soul-bearing art-rock to OTT Phil Spector Wall Of Sound extravaganzas and endearing country covers, it's all here…

20 RINGO STARR
SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY APPLE 1970

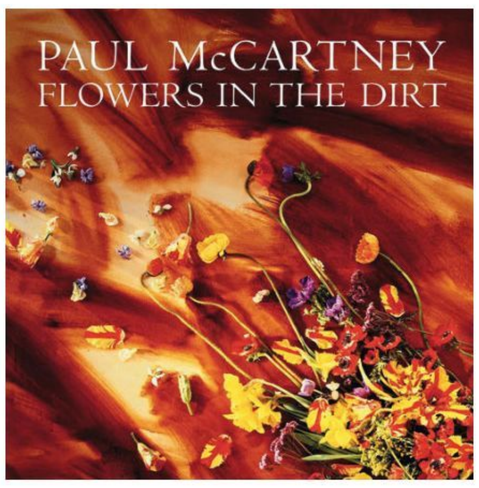
Country fan Ringo dabbled in the genre during his Beatles tenure, but his second solo album was wholly Americana in focus. Recorded in just three days in Nashville and engineered by Elvis guitar hero Scotty Moore, this is full of Starr's trademark easy-going charm – Ringo's own *Nashville Skyline*.
FIRST £13 LATEST £30

19 RINGO STARR
TIME TAKES TIME PRIVATE MUSIC 1992

Ringo handed over the reins of his first studio album in nine years to four producers: Jeff Lynne, Don Was, Phil Ramone and Peter Asher. Opener *Weight Of The World* is outrageously Beatles-esque, while Lynne brings the same kind of Fabs-apeing thud to *Don't Go Where The Road Don't Go*.
FIRST £42 LATEST £21



18 PAUL MCCARNTEY
FLAMING PIE
PARLOPHONE 1997
After immersing himself in the *Anthology* project, Macca upped his game for this mid-90s high point. Finally unafraid to compete with his 60s masterpieces, subtle nods to The Beatles are here, there and everywhere, especially the *Blackbird*-style fingerpicking of the heartrending *Little Willow* and *Calico Skies*. The rocking title track refers knowingly to The Beatles' apocryphal genesis story, while *The Song We Were Singing* nods to the Lennon/McCartney songwriting sessions at John's Forthlin Road home.
FIRST £42
LATEST £21



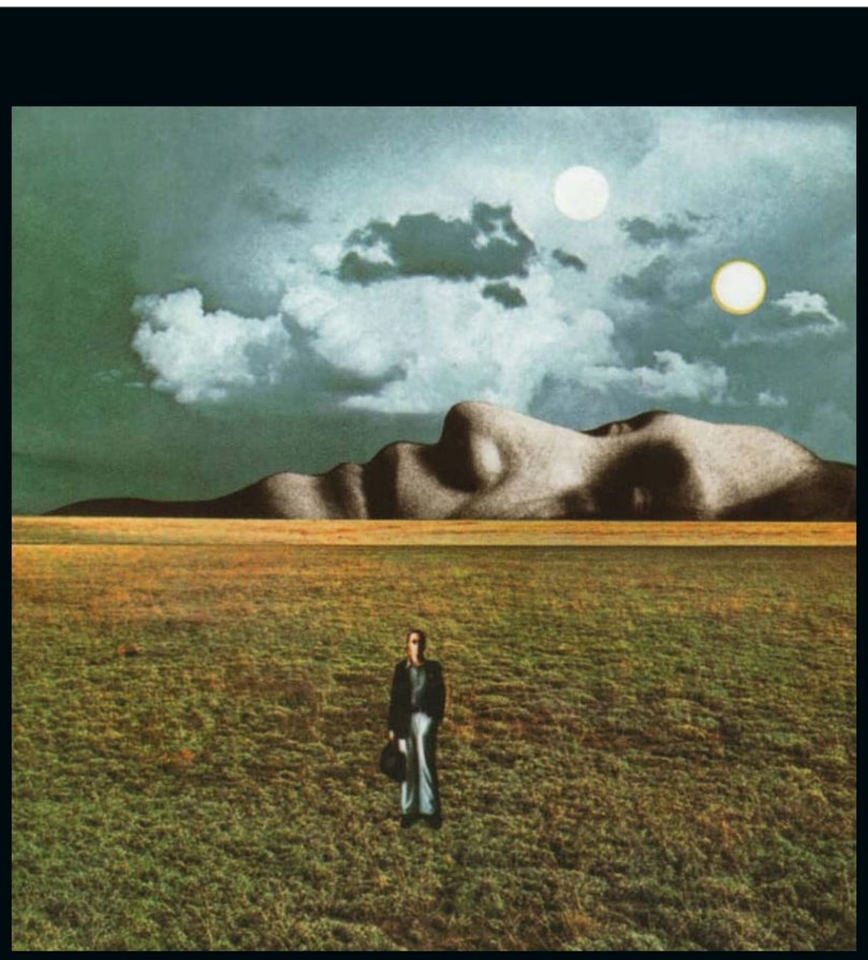
17 PAUL MCCARTNEY
FLOWERS IN THE DIRT
PARLOPHONE 1989
An Elvis Costello-Paul McCartney songwriting partnership was a lip-smacking prospect, but could Costello add the same bite to Macca's songs that Lennon once did? After working on a batch of demos, only a third of the final LP featured Costello. A missed opportunity, as the nine Elvis-Macca demos on the Special Edition prove this could have been truly superb.
FIRST £9
LATEST £31

16 GEORGE HARRISON
LIVING IN THE MATERIAL WORLD
APPLE 1973
George's *All Things Must Pass* follow-up was hotly anticipated at the time but has been rather forgotten since. There's much to enjoy, including the lovely opener *Give Me Love (Give Me Peace One Earth)* and plaintive *Be Here Now*. Harrison's conflicts between his spirituality and rock superstar status inform most of the lyrics and the bitter *Sue Me, Sue You Blues* proved The Beatles' break-up was still raw.
FIRST £10 LATEST £30

15 JOHN LENNON
ROCK 'N' ROLL
APPLE 1975
Stolen master tapes, threats of lawsuits and a gun-toting Phil Spector – how does Lennon's good-natured covers album sound so relaxed? The core of John's *Walls And Bridges* band, plus a host of other session dudes, knock out these evocative refits of 50s classics. After Spector got kicked off the project, arrangements were reined in, but the full-sounding recordings have a distinctly expansive mid-70s feel.
FIRST £4
LATEST £21

14 RINGO STARR
GOODNIGHT VIENNA APPLE 1973
Although less focused than its eponymous predecessor, Starr's everyman charm wins through here on another star-studded collection. The Lennon-penned rocking title track stands out, as does the New Orleans swing of Allen Toussaint's *Occapella*.
FIRST £5 LATEST £10

13 PAUL MCCARTNEY
TUG OF WAR
PARLOPHONE 1982
Reunited with George Martin, *Tug Of War* was heralded as a return to form for McCartney. Sessions were halted when Paul heard of John Lennon's murder, and his heartfelt tribute *Here Today* is goosebump-inducing.
FIRST £4 LATEST £19

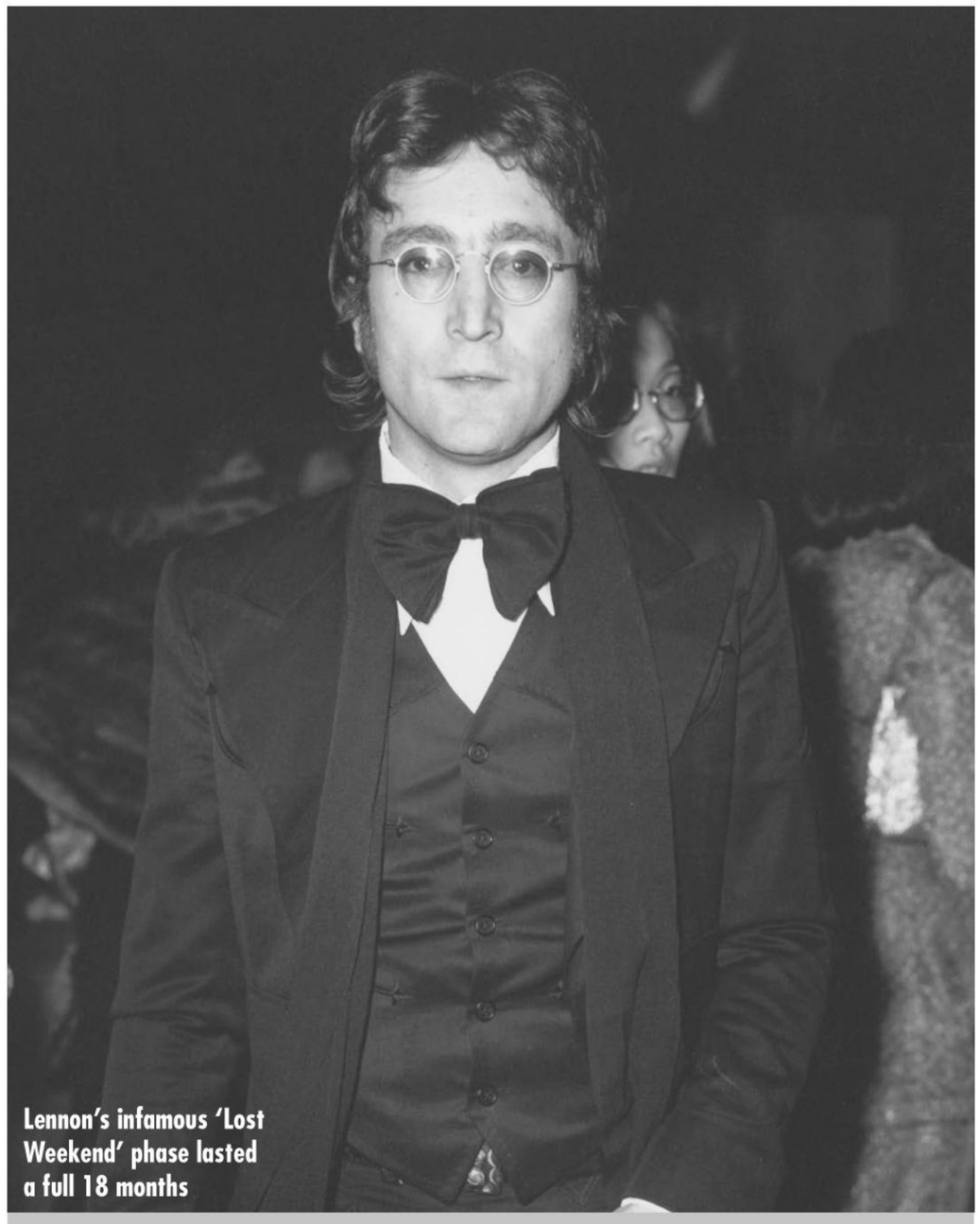


12 JOHN LENNON
MIND GAMES APPLE 1973

After the politically charged *Some Time In New York City*, Lennon ditched the activism for a straightforward song collection. *Bring On The Lucie (Freeda People)* is a finely honed slice of political positivism and *Out Of The Blue* is one of his best ballads in years. FIRST £7 LATEST £17

11 PAUL MCCARTNEY
CHAOS AND CREATION IN THE BACK YARD
PARLOPHONE 2005

The tantalising prospect of Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich pushing Macca to the limit bore fruit. Paul's signature style shines through on perky rocker *Fine Time*, ballad *Jenny Wren* and twee *English Tea*. The bittersweet *Too Much Rain* is textbook Macca defiance. FIRST £45 LATEST £21



Lennon's infamous 'Lost Weekend' phase lasted a full 18 months

10 JOHN LENNON
WALLS AND BRIDGES APPLE 1974

Cut during doing his 18-month 'Lost Weekend' while separated from Yoko, Lennon's lifestyle may have gone off the rails, but he's pretty focused here. Headline tracks are Elton John collaboration *Whatever Gets You Through The Night* and the beatific *#9 Dream*. John ups the pace for the urgent funk rock of *What You Got*. *Steel And Glass* recycles the riff from *How Do You Sleep?*, though this time his target is switched from Macca to Beatles manager Allen Klein.
FIRST £10 LATEST £21

FRANK EDWARDS/FOTOS INTERNATIONAL/GETTY IMAGES

9 GEORGE HARRISON
CLOUD NINE DARK HORSE 1987

As a seasoned hitmaker, producer Jeff Lynne was the go-to late-80s guy for Beatle-inflected AOR. George's return after a five-year lay-off was a welcome surprise and this polished studio effort was a platinum-selling global smash.

FIRST £6 LATEST £23

8 PAUL MCCARTNEY
MCCARTNEY APPLE 1970

After The Beatles' split left McCartney severely depressed, his first step as a solo artist put as much distance between himself and his former band as possible. Macca gives the middle finger to those desperate for a 'statement album' and delivers his best-ever solo cut, *Maybe I'm Amazed*.

FIRST £12 LATEST £19

7 JOHN LENNON
DOUBLE FANTASY GEFFEN 1980

When this was released, it was met with a collective shrug, but after Lennon's tragic murder, it was lauded as a career-best effort. Alternating between John and Yoko songs, John turns in precision-tooled pop while Yoko presents spiky art-rock. Lennon reins in his experimental side to provide conservative yet highly melodic cuts such as the tongue-in-cheek Elvis homage *(Just Like) Starting Over*. *Beautiful Boy* and *Woman* found him unafraid to embrace schmaltz.

FIRST £4 LATEST £18

6 RINGO STARR
RINGO
APPLE 1973

Ringo's first proper rock solo album is notable for many reasons, not least the fact that all three Beatle bandmates appear, as well as four fifths of The Band, plus Marc Bolan. Lennon gets the ball rolling with tongue-in-cheek opener *I'm The Greatest*, while Starr's co-write with George Harrison on *Photograph* is a charming singalong. McCartney weighs in with the whimsical *Six O'Clock* on Starr's best solo outing.

FIRST £4 LATEST £26

Linda and Paul Mc on a quick break away from their rural idyll

5 PAUL MCCARTNEY
RAM
APPLE 1971

How times have changed. Upon its release, critics carped that Macca had lost the plot, now *Ram* is considered a rough-hewn classic. Although this is now seen as a paean to domestic bliss, niggles with his former bandmates (mostly Lennon, naturally) arise through veiled asides. *Ram*'s centrepiece is the somewhat schizophrenic *Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey* medley. As he sings on *Monkberry Moon Delight*: "Catch up, cats and kittens. Don't get left behind!" Many did… FIRST £15 LATEST £22

4 PAUL MCCARTNEY AND WINGS
BAND ON THE RUN APPLE 1973

A loose concept album about a fictitious band. Sounds familiar? If this didn't quite scale the giddy heights of *Sgt. Pepper* it did resurrect McCartney's critical standing. Macca's habit of compiling unfinished snippets into multi-part songs works seamlessly on the title track and Alan Partridge favourite *Jet* soars above its elusive lyrics. FIRST £8 LATEST £22

3 JOHN LENNON
IMAGINE APPLE 1971

The title track is John's towering solo statement, but elsewhere he marshals his pain and turmoil into surprisingly accessible material, with the self-lacerating *Crippled Inside* and *Jealous Guy* nestling alongside the pretty *Oh My Love* and country waltz of *Oh Yoko!*
FIRST £11 LATEST £22

HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

Lennon's finest post-Beatles work was hewn out of his primal scream therapy

2 GEORGE HARRISON
ALL THINGS MUST PASS APPLE 1970

Where the Harrison levee breaks. All those years of playing second fiddle to the Lennon-McCartney songwriting axis led to an expansive backlog, a triple album in fact. Phil Spector adds his Wall Of Sound to *Isn't It A Pity* and bouncy *What Is Life*, while *If Not For You* is a top-drawer Dylan cover.
FIRST £42 LATEST £65

1 JOHN LENNON
JOHN LENNON/PLASTIC ONO BAND APPLE 1970

The clanging funeral bells that introduce this suggest we're in uncharted territory – this is one of the bravest records ever released by a major league rock star. Inspired by his primal scream therapy to kick heroin, Lennon's howls of pain are breathtaking. Stark, clanging arrangements frame these simple, but devastating songs. The pain of his childhood is laid bare on *Mother* and *My Mummy's Dead*, while John's rejection of hero worship and idolatry is expressed on *I Found Out*. *Isolation* and *Look At Me* are beatific ballads, the latter fingerpicked effort written on Lennon's Rishikesh sojourn with his former band. "I don't believe in Beatles, I just believe in me," he sings on list song God. "The dream is over".
It certainly was. And Lennon buried it here.
FIRST £20 LATEST £18

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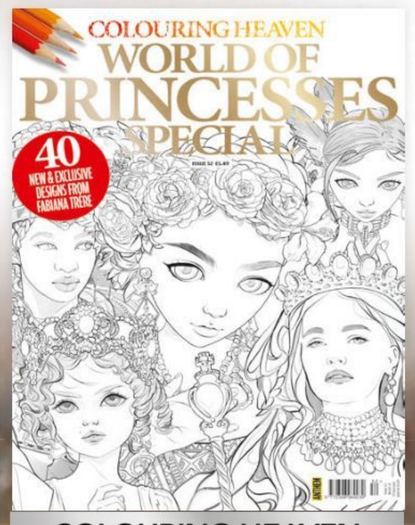

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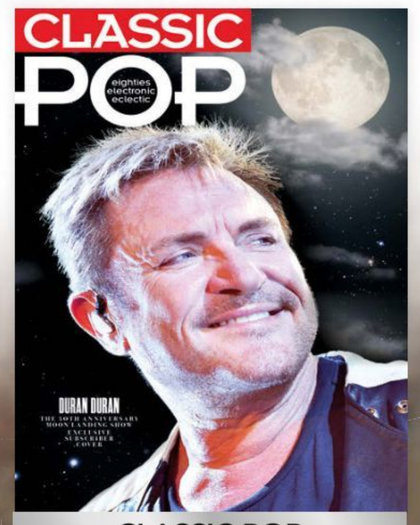

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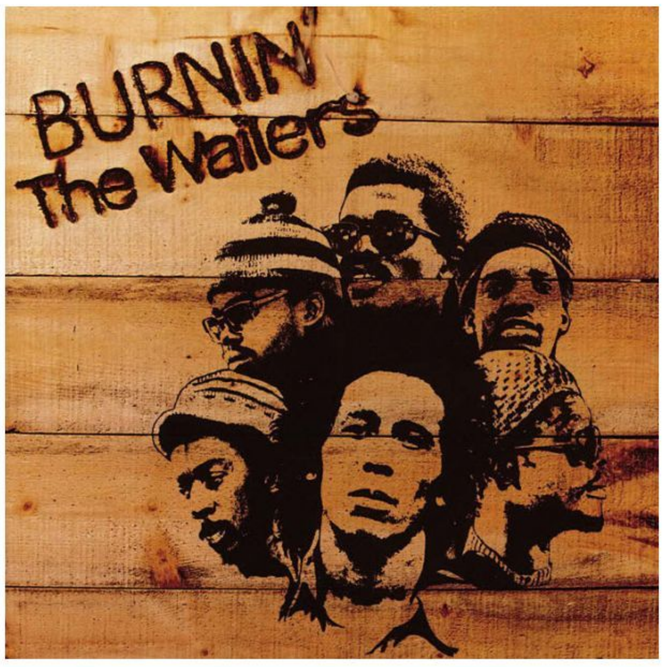
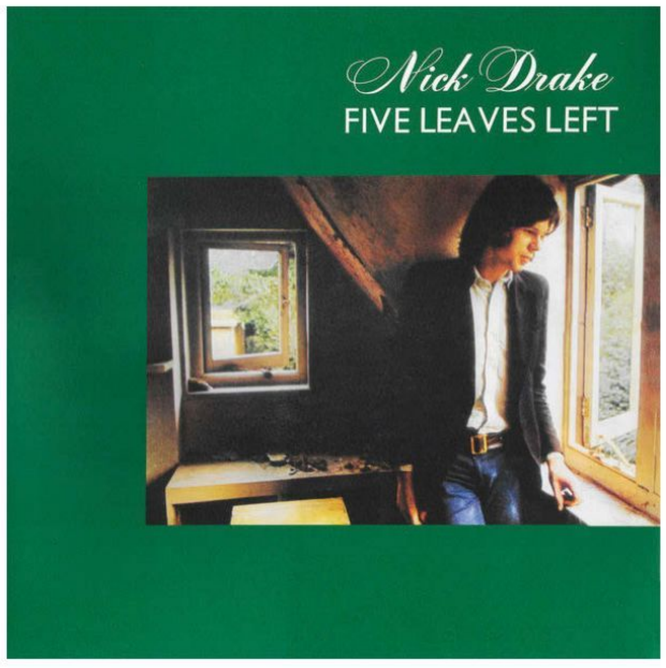
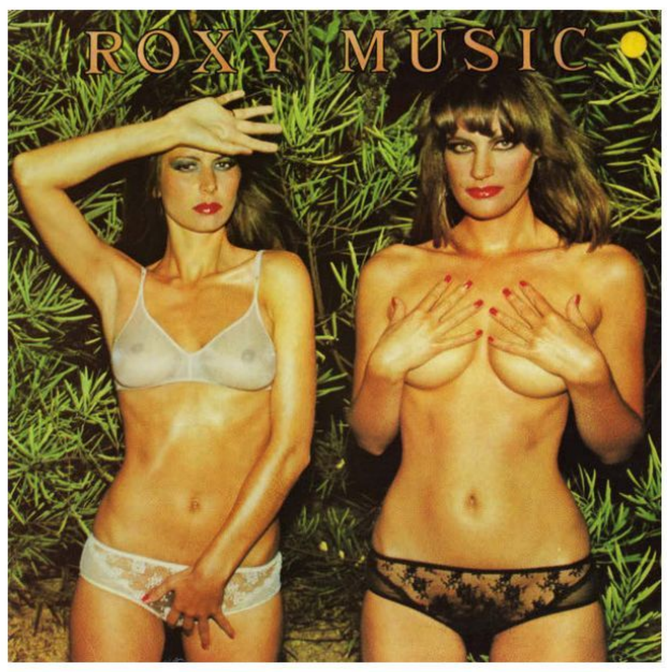
TREASURE

ISLAND

The world's most famous palm tree turned 60 this year. From Bob Marley to Amy Winehouse via Nick Drake, Roxy Music, Cat Stevens, Grace Jones, U2, PJ Harvey, Tricky and many others, Island was the ultimate paradise for real-deal artists. Talking to the men who made it happen, **Gareth Murphy** reveals the true story behind the music business legend







What's the best record label of all time? It's a question we sometimes ask in here. Fire this riddle into a room full of musos and watch a shouting match degenerate into a mass brawl. But conduct a proper debate, and I hereby contend, that regardless of one's personal tastes, a betting man would put his money on Island snatching the democratic vote. On all the key indicators: artists, classics, sleeves, studios, longevity, the ability to break genres, remain relevant, inspire the field and incubate younger labels, Island Records is *the* contender.

For a start, no other rival comes anywhere near Island's founder in terms of adventure, taste and living life like a widescreen movie. Yes, the epic story of Island Records begins and ends with its founder, Chris Blackwell, the suave soul-rebel so ingeniously artful, the music business jealously nicknamed him The Babyface Killer.

A white Jamaican born into technicolor horizons, Chris Blackwell's mother Blanche Lindo was the heiress of a Jamaican rum dynasty whose Sephardic ancestry stretched all the way back to 17th Century Portugal. His father, Middleton Blackwell, was a protestant Irishman of military stock who hailed from Westport in County Mayo.

The only child of this multicultural love affair, young Christopher missed so much school as a result of chronic asthma that he could not read nor write at the age of eight. But his tropical home provided its own kind of education. Picture a colonial world of spinning fans, Jamaican maids and wild parties where the likes of Errol Flynn and Ian Fleming debated life while Blackwell senior stood at the record player blaring Puccini and Wagner at curtain-flapping volumes.

The separation of Chris Blackwell's parents provoked a period of upheaval that, in retrospect, may have forged the grit from which his future imprint grew. Shortly after his father relocated to Chicago, young Christopher was sent to boarding school in Harrow, a miserable experience of exile and academic failure that nonetheless had him flying between England, Jamaica and America, getting a bird's eye view of the world and its music. Nearly expelled for smuggling cigarettes, he dropped out aged 15 and spent years hustling around Jamaica. He tried his hand at jet-ski instructing, real estate, even professional gambling. But through his mother's friends, he landed two plum jobs, first as a runner for the Governor, then handling logistics for the Jamaican scenes in *Dr. No*, the first James Bond movie.

LICENSE TO THRILL

In 1959, aged 22, Chris Blackwell released his first homespun Island singles, some of which became Jamaican number ones. But it was the sudden explosion of Kingston's soundsystems that inspired a radical rethink. Blackwell began sizing up the three main soundsystem producers: Duke Reid, Coxsone Dodd and King Edwards. Knowing that you needed hot product to be taken seriously, he went crate digging in New York. By tearing off the labels, he could resell his mysterious 50 cent singles as secret exclusives to the Kingston soundsystems for as much as $100 a pop.

By 1962, Blackwell was standing at a crossroads. He was 25, Jamaica had just declared independence and Kingston was exploding with new labels and artists at a time when thousands of West Indians were migrating to boomtown England. With the money he'd made on *Dr. No*, he moved to London, remodelling Island as a wholesaler connecting Jamaica's homegrown supply with its migrant diaspora. He rented a ground floor warehouse on Cambridge Road in Kilburn, hired an employee named David Betteridge and began flogging records to shops and market stalls from the boot of his Mini Cooper. On his rounds, he noticed that stores such as Musicland in Soho were selling ska to mods. Through these networks, Blackwell made a fateful encounter with Guy Stevens, the resident DJ of Soho club, The Scene.

The speed-freak DJ was such an exceptional vinyl hunter that The Rolling Stones and The Who were already rummaging through his collection, said to be the best in London. Blackwell gave Stevens his own Island sub-label, Sue, a fast-moving spot-and-license model that pressed English editions of hot R&B. Thanks to indie hits such as *Land Of A Thousand Dances* by Chris Kenner and *Harlem Shuffle* by Bob & Earl, "Guy Stevens took us out of West Indian reggae music," explains David Betteridge. "He was buying in tracks from America, and that gave us

ALL IMAGES PROVIDED BY ISLAND RECORDS

the knowledge of how to break bands into the mainstream."

Then came the crossover hybrids. In late 1964, Blackwell produced and managed Millie Small's *My Boy Lollipop*, a number 2 smash hit. Although he had to license the masters to a major, he repeated the same trick with his next discovery, the Spencer Davis Group. *Keep On Running* was originally a Jamaican tune but given a mod beat and a sprinkling of guitar fuzz, it knocked *Day Tripper* by The Beatles off the number 1 spot. Island was still only a niche import business, but Chris Blackwell, hitting 30 in the Summer of Love, was turning his sharp eye to psychedelic rock.

THINK PINK

Thus began the magical period that vinyl collectors now term Pink Island as a result of the labels used between 1967 and 1975. The first big release was *Mr Fantasy*, a psychedelic album by Steve Winwood's Traffic. Also in 1967, Blackwell set up Blue Mountain Music, his successful publishing arm. Believing that "a proper label has to have a studio", he then invested in an ambitious recording facility inside a deconsecrated church on Basing Street in Notting Hill. On a roll throughout 1968, Island scooped John Martyn; teenage rockers Free and Spooky Tooth, plus Jethro Tull. By 1969, Island had grown so big that it needed its own pressing plant. Classics kept rolling off the lines, such as King Crimson's *In The Court Of The Crimson King* and Fairport Convention's *Liege & Lief* . Nick Drake's masterpiece, *Five Leaves Left* although a slow burner, grew into its own timeless reference.

By 1970, the vastly enlarged Island was scoring transatlantic smash hits, in part thanks to a special relationship with A&M, a likeminded Californian indie. That's how

Traffic's fusion of rock, pop, soul and R&B became a touchstone for Island as it grew into its next phase

Free reached number 4 on the Billboard Hot 100 with *All Right Now*. Bigger still was Cat Stevens, who knocked out three albums for Island in 11 months; *Mona Bone Jakon*, *Tea For The Tillerman* and *Teaser And The Firecat*. He became Island's best-selling artist of these rose-tinted years.

> "IT WAS A WHOLE BREEDING GROUND OF MUSICAL GENRES, AND THAT'S WHAT WAS COOL ABOUT IT"
>
> **DAVID ENTHOVEN**

But the mad scientist who gave Island its appetite for musical risks remained Guy Stevens, the talent magnet who'd cast and named both Procol Harum and Mott The Hoople. "Blackwell was the overall creative presence," attests Chris Wright, manager of Jethro Tull. "But he had a great aspiring partner in Guy Stevens, who moved them into areas that even Blackwell wouldn't have gone into. Guy was obviously a bit nutty, like sometimes talented people can be. He had this wildish mop of frizzy hair, a little intense, wild in a way, but he was good fun." David Betteridge paints a similar portrait. "Guy had a very high-intensity personality; hard and driven. Very nice man, possibly bordering on the edge of madness. He saw things before anyone else. He was really an absolute genius."

What also made Island the place to be was Blackwell's trick of creating an ambitious round-table synergy, allowing artists, producers and managers to operate as semi-independent nests. To net Jethro Tull, Blackwell set the band's handlers an irresistible challenge: "When you've made 10 hits which go Top 30, I'll switch everything over to your own label." As Chris Wright explains: "Being pretty smart, Blackwell would have said to himself, 'They won't have 10 Top 10 singles anyway, so I can easily agree to that'. And he also would have said, 'But if they do, I'm gonna be making lots of money out of it as well'. It was a win-win situation for him."

Wright and Ellis formed Chrysalis in 1969, at first a mini-indie plugged into Island's heavier machinery. Another case in point is Trojan, opened in 1968 above Island's warehouse on Neasden Lane in Willesden. Distracted by all their rock successes, Blackwell and Betteridge gave the Trojan brandname and concept to Lee Gupthal – the Jamaican owner of the Musicland shops, who

Island Records' founder Chris Blackwell snapped hanging out with Junior Murvin, Bob Marley and Jacob Miller

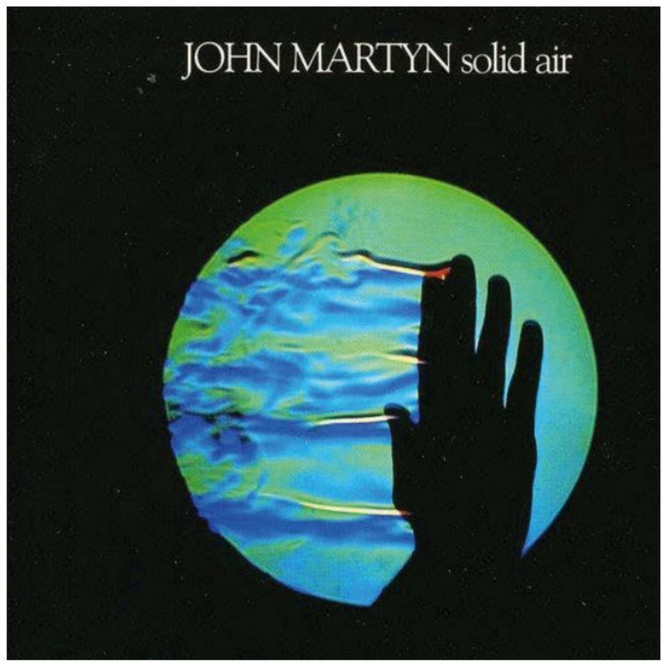
N. DEION

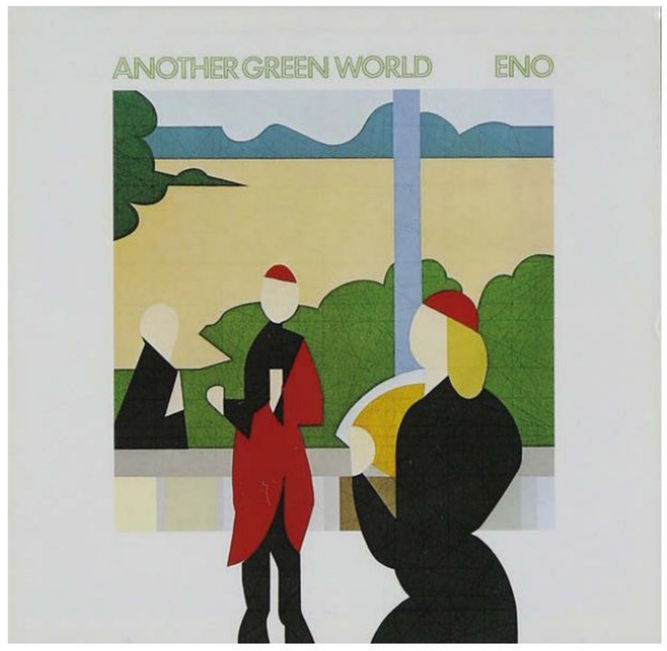
also happened to be Blackwell's original landlord. It was Island's fleet of vans that distributed Trojan directly to Caribbean stalls and specialist stores all over Britain.

Almost every producer who anchored off Island got to operate his own boat. Joe Boyd, the producer behind Nick Drake, Fairport Convention and The Incredible String Band licensed his masters via his Witchseason production company. Another talent magnet was David Enthoven, the manager of King Crimson. Through his agency, EG, Enthoven brought in his next gang of hopefuls, Roxy Music. "Blackwell allowed you to have a vision and you stood or fell by your vision," explains David Enthoven. "I have an undying gratitude for the man. He was very skilled in tact."

Roxy Music's debut in 1972 proved the point. With their glittery suits and velvety fuzz, Bryan Ferry's gang of weirdos were not entirely understood by the old-schoolers inside Island. Thankfully, Enthoven found a fan in Island's number three, Tim Clark. "Had it been left to the so-called A&R department, which was Muff Winwood [Steve Winwood's brother], Roxy Music would never have been signed to Island Records," affirms Enthoven. "Tim got it immediately. He got the music, he got the artwork. Muff Winwood absolutely rejected it. He thought they were rubbish. And interestingly, one day in Basing Street, Tim and I were looking at the first Roxy cover, Chris Blackwell walked past and asked Tim, 'have you done the deal yet?' Once Chris saw the artwork, to be fair to him, he absolutely got what we were on about."

The same year, Island began handling sales for another new indie, Virgin Records. Their first release, Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells,* sold over a million copies and caused considerable head-scratching inside Island. Wondering if they should launch their own sub-label for instrumental mood music, Blackwell's half-hearted idea was shot down at an A&R meeting. "Why don't we call it Lukewarm Fucking Records?" asked Guy Stevens to a room full of laughter. Apart from Brian Eno's first solo records, which weren't that ambient, Island stuck to rhythm, melody and writers.





As artists like John Cale and Sparks were welcomed aboard, Chris Blackwell turned his attentions back to Jamaica. Trojan's chart successes in the late 60s had shown it was possible to get Jamaican reggae onto BBC radio. But Trojan's open-door policy was proving so worryingly chaotic, that Blackwell and Betteridge gave their minority shares back to Lee Gupthal. Trojan was heading for an embarrassing fall when The Wailers mooched into Island's office in late 1972. Blackwell had just been involved in Jamaica's first gangster movie, *The Harder They Come*, starring Jimmy Cliff. Sensing the time was right for harder-edged Trenchtown reggae-rock, Blackwell gave The Wailers £4,000 to record an album in Kingston. The end result was *Catch A Fire*. Blackwell bet again on a rawer, more political follow-up before year's end – *Burnin'*, albeit with a slight alteration to the artist name: Bob Marley & The Wailers.

Interest remained so scant that Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer quit while promoting *Burnin'* to empty halls. It turned out to be Eric Clapton's 1974 cover of *I Shot The Sheriff* – an American number 1 – that introduced reggae to mainstream rock audiences.

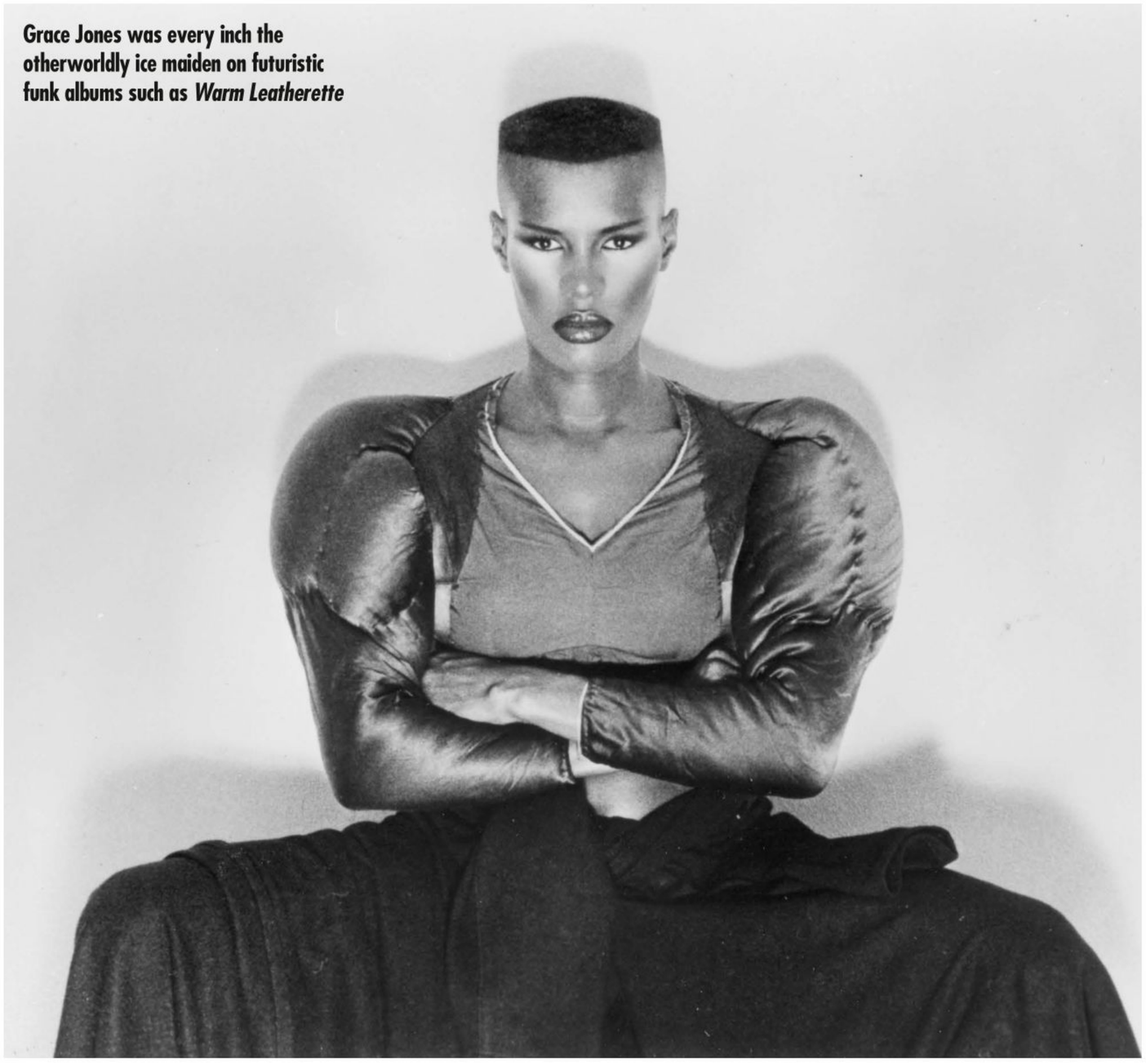
It took a bigger album, a bigger tour and the full-time help of a big PR agent for Bob Marley to finally break. In 1975, his Lyceum concerts marked the moment. That year, Island moved into a stunning new building on St. Peter's Square in Hammersmith. With its open space and potted palms, this was the new era of the palm tree logo.

Unfortunately, the company soon experienced its first financial storm. Not only were finances being drained by Island's costly American branch, the other hungry mouth was its pressing plant. When Trojan went bust and Chrysalis and Virgin flew away, almost a third of Island's volumes vanished.

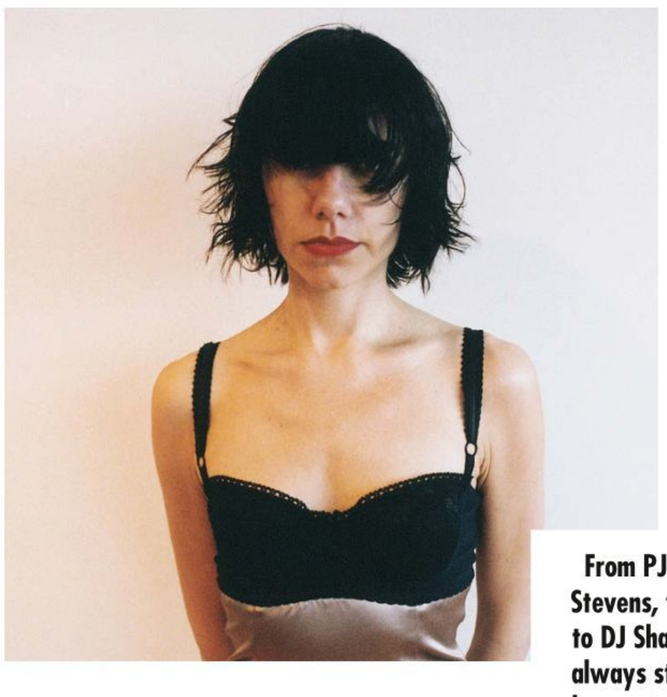
As David Betteridge explains: "In '68 to '69, Island went from being a sort of specialist West Indian label to suddenly breaking acts all over the place. And the shock of that, although

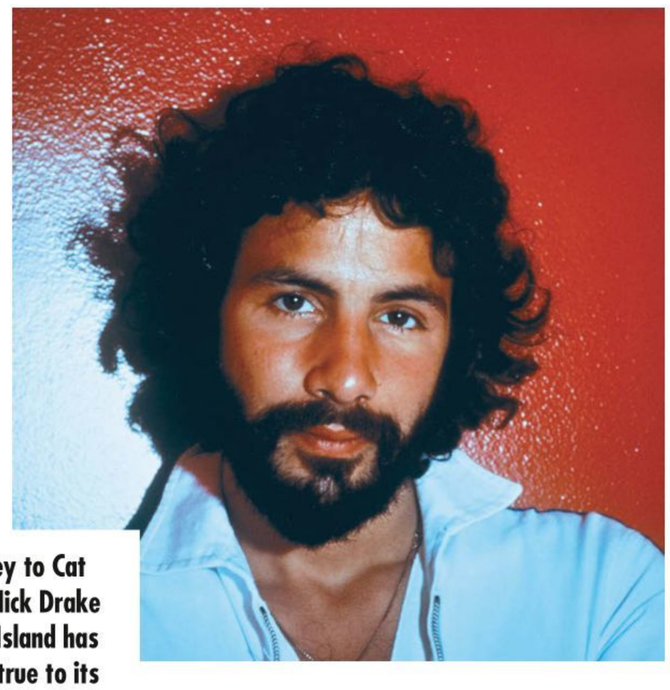
Roxy Music in the studio at The Royal College Of Art, Kensington at the time of their debut album

BRIAN COOKE / REDFERNS



Grace Jones was every inch the otherworldly ice maiden on futuristic funk albums such as *Warm Leatherette*





From PJ Harvey to Cat Stevens, from Nick Drake to DJ Shadow, Island has always stayed true to its long-established ethos of signing mavericks and sonic game-changers who have altered the course of popular music across the planet

we didn't feel it in that sense because we were young guns, sort of began to spell the inevitable downfall. I just think we became too successful too quickly and didn't know where to go."

Chris Blackwell was adored by his artists, but the label's top lieutenants suffered from the boss's absenteeism. Constantly distracted by side ventures, the Island boss not only let problems pile up, he avoided difficult conversations. "He did sort of do a disappearing act," confirms Tim Clark, who replaced the disillusioned David Betteridge as MD. "He spent a lot of time in America. He was messing around with films and wasn't very much available for us at Island Records in the UK. He was great at spending money. But you know, Chris, when approached about this sort of stuff, would just behave like a naughty schoolboy. He grinned and chortled and charmed his way out of it. And at the end of the day, he was actually the one who found the solution to the financial problems."

In 1976, the pressing plant was axed and the core label restructured with the help of a £2 million license deal from EMI. Despite this, and the loss of key figures along the way, notably Guy Stevens (who would die in 1981 after drink and drug problems) Island stayed on the cutting edge. In 1977, Blackwell opened Compass Point Studios in the Bahamas. He even had his own little propeller plane for island hopping around the Caribbean. In this sunny period of Bob Marley hits, enter Grace Jones, The Slits, The B-52's, Tom Tom Club, The Buggles, Kid Creole & The Coconuts, Robert Palmer, Tom Waits and Malcolm McLaren's solo albums.

When Marley died in 1981, Chris Blackwell had already picked his next winning ticket. U2, originally a gawky bunch of post-punks from Dublin. Their debut album, *Boy*, was warmly received by critics, but they struggled with their 1981 follow-up *October*. *War*, the third album, provided the European breakthrough, reaching number one in the UK album charts in March 1983.

Quickly eclipsed by a series of freak events, Island suddenly and spectacularly broke the bank, thanks to a production deal with Trevor Horn's ZTT imprint. Frankie Goes To Hollywood became England's sensation of 1984, while *Legend*, Bob Marley's greatest hits compilation, snowballed into a global blockbuster. With a whopping £56 million pouring into Island in 1984 alone, Chris Blackwell was at it again, opening a new sub-label in New York, 4th & Broadway, a mostly 12" imprint for black dance music.

Despite more smash hits, such as Robert Palmer's *Addicted To Love* and Grace Jones's *Slave To The Rhythm*, the underground film project turned into a sink hole and Blackwell was unable to pay U2 the £5 million they were owed in royalties. He talked them

ISLAND RECORDS PUB QUIZ

1 Who wrote the self-fulfilling words: "Fame is but a fruit tree, so very unsound. It can never flourish til its stock is in the ground"?

2 Named after a Charles Dickens character in *David Copperfield*, their 1970 debut album on Island Records was *…Very 'Eavy, …Very 'Umble*. Can you name the band?

3 The cover of Roxy Music's fourth album featured two semi-naked models Bryan Ferry met in a bar in Portugal. Censored in America, the US edition featured just the background foliage. Name the album.

4 In 1974, Brian Eno's second solo album introduced the notion of Oblique Strategies – a card-based method of promoting creativity. Name the album.

5 In 1977, the artist known as Cat Stevens auctioned all his instruments for charity and changed his name to Yusuf Islam. What was his real birth name?

6 Name the 1978 Bob Marley song in which he describes an imminent gathering at which The Wailers, The Damned, The Jam, The Clash, The Maytals and Dr Feelgood will all be present.

7 In 1978, Island helped to finance an experimental New York label by licensing its European rights before any records were made. Becoming the ultimate "No Wave" label of the early 80s, thanks to artists such as James White And The Blacks, Kid Creole & The Coconuts, Lizzy Mercier Descloux and Was (Not Was). Name the label.

8 The Compass Point All Stars was the name given to the group of session musicians who orbited around Chris Blackwell's recording studio in The Bahamas. Name its drummer and bassist.

9 Who was the French artist and photographer who created all of Grace Jones' sleeves, iconography and videos in the 1980s; who fathered her only son; and who Grace Jones claimed recently was the only man she ever truly loved?

10 Chris Blackwell has confessed to not really liking the music of one particular Island act, claiming he signed them more for their spirit and determination. Describing their early sound as "rinky dink", who was he talking about?

into becoming 10% shareholders – a heavily guarded secret at the time, which partly explains U2's intense planning throughout 1986 to become the world's biggest and most self-reliant touring machine. Island limped through 1986 to *The Joshua Tree* the following March, U2's American breakthrough. No matter how much loot Blackwell blew, his magic piggy bank kept shitting red-hot vinyl.

But now, U2's growing power gave pause for thought. Aged 52 and sensing that he was stretching his luck, the Babyface Killer finally cashed out to the highest bidder. He sold Island in 1989 to PolyGram for a cool $300 million.

Blackwell stayed on as Island's chief, signing PJ Harvey, Sinead O'Connor, P.M. Dawn, Stereo MCs, The Cranberries, Pulp, The Orb, Tricky, Archive, Tindersticks, Talvin Singh, DJ Shadow and others. But in 1997, he resigned following disagreements with PolyGram over his new film division, Island Pictures.

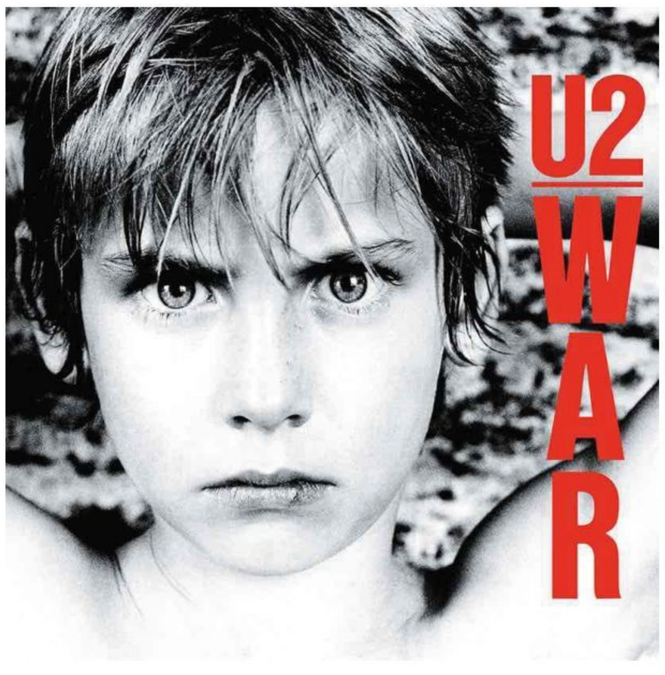
"I found it impossible to keep the same spirit as when it was very small," he told a journalist. "When it's very small, you can have a sort of guerrilla-force type spirit. As a guerrilla force, you can compete with an army. But as a small army, it's difficult to compete with a big one."

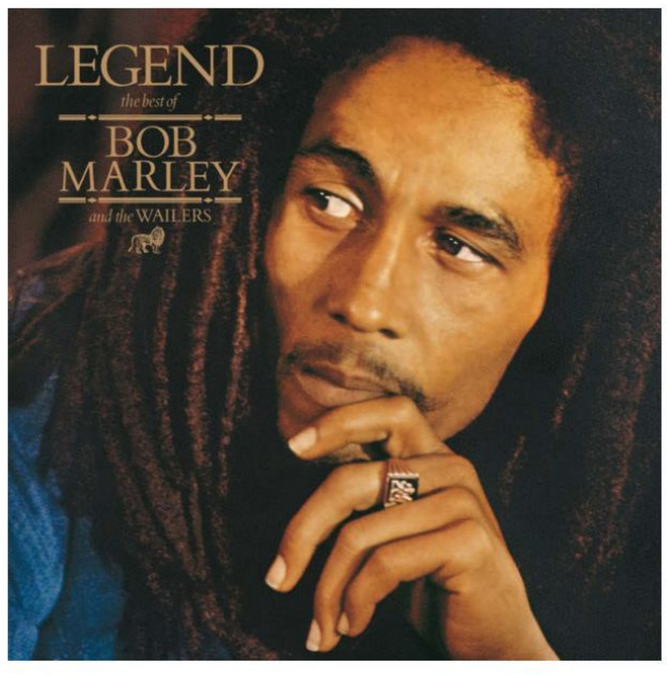
Island remains the prestigious imprint of PolyGram's successor, Universal. The likes of Amy Winehouse and The Killers have added to the 60-year legend, even though purists will contest whether modern Island, without its founder, is still the real thing.

So what made Island so special? "There was such a diverse range of music," argues David Enthoven. "There was a kaleidoscope of talent. Island didn't have a musical identity, it was a breeding ground of musical genres, and that's what was cool about it."

> "IF YOU'RE DOING WHAT YOU TRULY LOVE, THERE'S NO HURRY TO GET THERE. ALWAYS GO SLOWLY AND STEADILY"
>
> **CHRIS BLACKWELL**

If you join the dots, the bigger picture is a giant tree in the genealogy of music. Best ever label? It gets my vote. Apart from the attributes of taste, intelligence and the record industry's most crap-free batting average, the mystery of Island Records boils down to Chris Blackwell's knack of maintaining hundreds of balls in the air. Although money was overstretched, artists were given levels of time, space and faith that other labels wouldn't provide. Maybe it all comes back to Jamaica. "If you're doing what you truly love," muses the man himself, "there's no hurry to get there. You should always go slowly and steadily. It's always more fun attacking than defending. Because if you get there too fast, you're going to spend most of your life defending."





NICK DRAKE'S 'PINK MOON', 3 COUNTRY LIFE & TAKING TIGER MOUNTAIN (BY STRATEGY), 3 STEVEN GEORGIOU, 6 PUNKY REGGAE PARTY \ ZE RECORDS, 8 JAY DUNBAR & BOBBIE SHAKESPEARE, 9 JEANIHAUT GONDE, JO OLS

Trading Up

Landing your wishlist vinyl can be hugely expensive, but **Gordon Coates** wasn't going to let that stop him. Find out how he traded his way to the Holy Grail...

Like most vinyl collectors, I've developed a wishlist of albums I want to buy before I die, and while the last three or so years has seen many of them fall into my lap relatively painlessly – and by that I mean for under a tenner – there are still many more records I long for.

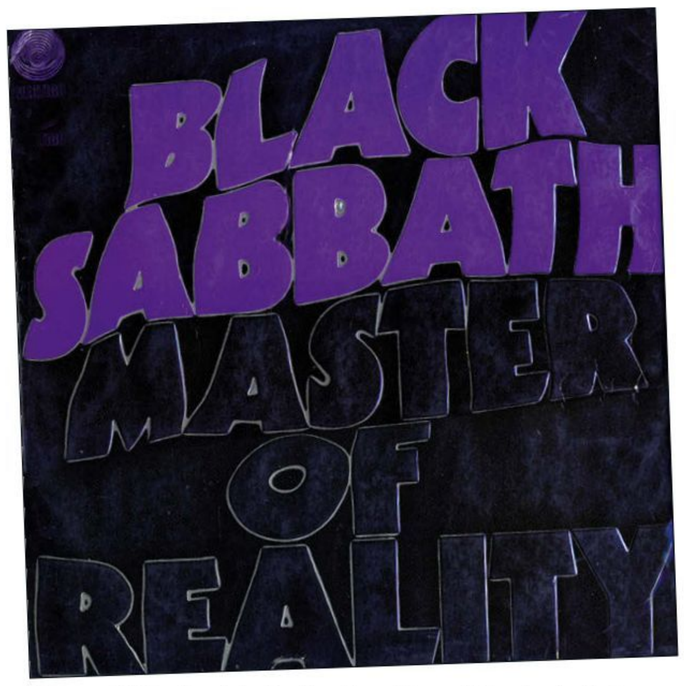
Unfortunately, I'm unlikely to own these because, like most collectors, I don't fancy telling my girlfriend I've dropped two mortgage payments on something I can listen to on Spotify for free, and no amount of saying "but you can hear the difference!" will bring her round to my way of thinking.

At the top of my bucket list is the Vertigo Spiral UK first pressing of *Master Of Reality* by Black Sabbath, and a dealer friend of mine had just sold a near-Mint copy for £400. When I idly search eBay, another UK first pressing sits taunting me with a £399 price tag. And that includes the poster. Bargain! That purple lettering. That embossing. And did I mention it includes the poster? Then I had a flash of inspiration. Why couldn't I simply trade my way to the object of my desire?

The premise was simple. I start with £10 and spend the next three to four months digging for victory at bargain bins, car boot sales and charity shops – and with a little luck and a fair wind, I can buy, sell and trade my way to a spanking near-Mint copy of *Master Of Reality*. How hard could it be?

THE RULES OF THE GAME

- I have a £10 starting fund
- At no point can I go into the red. If I spend all my money, then I have to wait until something sells before buying more stock
- When selling online, all fees must be deducted from the final total
- Online auction sites, auction houses, charity shops and car boot sales are all fair game
- The experiment is concluded when I give up or have enough to purchase an EX copy of Black Sabbath's *Master Of Reality*



Master Of Reality: The bucket list object of Gordon's desire

THE EVE OF THE WAR

Skipton in North Yorkshire had always been a happy hunting ground for me, with a nice mix of charity shops, a record store/micro pub called The Soundbar and a market that had served up some gems over the years.

An initial circuit of the town offered up nothing of serious interest, but in the second-to-last charity shop of the day, among the 80-odd LPs, I pick up Chicago Transit Authority's eponymous double album, *The Present* and *Long Distance Voyager* by The Moody Blues, *Crises* by Mike Oldfield and my sure-fire seller, *The War of The Worlds*, complete with the booklet! Scope offers up a rare jazz oddity in Ben Webster's *Rare Live Performance 1962* and an Ella Fitzgerald album, all for the princely sum of £1 each.

These go straight onto eBay and I'm delighted that Chicago Transit Authority, *The Present* and *The War of the Worlds* sell relatively quickly, bolstering my kitty by £30 and giving me a bit of wiggle room.

I decide to try to put together a jazz bundle to see if bulk selling might speed things up, and the following week I pick up Oscar Peterson's gatefold *Girl Talk*, complete with booklet, *Basie/Eckstine Incorporated* and Ray Charles' *The Exciting Years* for £1 each, and then impulse buy Waylon Jennings' *Honky Tonk Heroes* (£1) and Sam Cooke's double album *The Man & His Music* (£2).

The Jazz bundle does well, collecting watchers at an impressive rate, and the day before the auction ends I get my one and only bid of £25 plus £4 postage. Minus expenses, I make £16 on the deal and someone, somewhere, gets an absolute bargain.

The problem I have is that at my present rate it will take me a year and a half to get my beloved, and yes, I have taken to calling it this, so I need a less cautious approach to the experiment. Or, to put it in gambler's parlance, I need to get my money in the game.

THERE IS BUT ONE TRUTH, DADDY

I have a free couple of hours in Fleetwood and opt to take a quick tour of the charity shops. I'm glad I do, as Scope offers up my first valuable rarity. The Wind In The Willows (£1) look like a manufactured hippie group from the late 60s cashing in on the Summer of Love

Charity shop bargains helped to fund the kitty

bandwagon and normally it would go back in the pile, but there's something about the eyes of one of the backing singers which looks familiar. I recruit Google to help me place the face and am delighted and horrified in equal measure to find it's a pre-Blondie, pre-stilettoes Debbie Harry making her recording debut. She is supplying vocals, tambourine and finger cymbals, but that's nothing. Someone else is playing 'Hairy Drums' and the band have a spiritual advisor credited on the album. Utter cods-wallop, but due to Harry's involvement, the album is very collectable, so I've warmed to it considerably. As soon as I list it, the bids come in and five days later it goes for £32. This is more like it!

The same week, more charity shop finds bring me *Minus Plus* from the little-known 60s psychedelic band Smith, *Rumours* (£1) by the long-forgotten Carolina act Arrogance (£1) and *Pink Cadillac* by John Prine (£3.99).

I'm accruing stock at a great rate and if my aim was to build my record collection for free, it would be easy to subsidise my habit with a few sales on eBay here and there. However, I still need to speed things up, so I want to get out of the bargain bins and start dealing in the premium stuff.

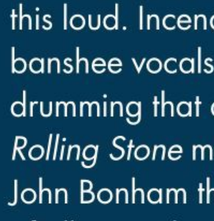
IN THE LAP OF THE GODS

Action Records in Preston has been around in one form or another since 1979, and like many established places, it made the jump from a market stall to a shop and hasn't looked back since. I take in some of the stuff which hasn't sold on eBay (Moody Blues, Melanie, Dolly, Mike Oldfield) and the owner offers me £12 in trade, which I cheerfully accept because I want to put a little bit of money in and buy the rarest undervalued record I can find.

I spend the next hour working my way through the entire shop and come up with a 1981 pressing of *Geisha Boys*, a live Queen concert from Tokyo in 1976. I use my phone to check its scarcity and I can't find another copy on eBay. In fact, I can't find another copy for sale on the internet, so I haggle the price down from £30 to £25. I also pick up an EX first press of *Presence* by Led Zeppelin for a bargain £5.

FAVOURITE FINDS

SAM COOKE
THE MAN & HIS MUSIC



A Change Is Gonna Come… Wonderful World… You Send Me… I could say music doesn't get better than this, but then the great Lou Rawls joins the finest singer of all time on *Bring It On Home To Me* and together they set a new benchmark for just how beautiful the human voice can be. The songs, the voice, the charisma… This is the full package.

LED ZEPPELIN
LED ZEPPELIN

From the moment that the needle lands on *Good Times Bad Times,* you know you're in for something special, and 50 years later there are few bands who have been this good while being this loud. Incendiary guitar, wailing banshee vocals and balls-out drumming that demonstrates why *Rolling Stone* magazine named John Bonham the greatest of all time. There's a reason why this is considered THE album to own by many collectors.

CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL
CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL

To say that John Fogerty has a set of pipes on him is an understatement and nowhere is that raw power more evident than on the first Creedence album. Sure, it doesn't have many of his 1969 hits. Sure, it's guilty of drifting off into aimless psychedelic outbursts at times, but there are very few people who could cover *I Put A Spell On You* and give Screamin' Jay a run for his money. They made better albums, but never rocked harder.

I tell the owner about my plan and he's more than happy for me to make a profit on it. His philosophy, which has stood him in good stead, is "Buy it, add a few quid and sell it on". This works out well, as I list *Geisha Boys* for £50, and accept a £40.01 offer shortly before the auction closes. Soon after, Sam Cooke and Waylon sell for £6 each, giving me my first £50+ turnover week.

DAZED & CONFUSED

Valuing Led Zeppelin vinyl can be an absolute minefield, where even veteran experts get lost. Alternate tracklistings, inverted logos, matrix numbers and different coloured wording all combine to give you a picture of which particular version of an album you've got. The permutations can be baffling and even when you've narrowed down what you've got, you can still mess up on the valuation, but what's life without adventure?

I spend the next week watching every bit of Led Zepplin under £50 that passes through eBay, trying to spot a bargain with my novice's eye. I know, like most collectors, that the plum red labels are indicators of early pressings, so I focus in on that and when I spot *Led Zeppelin I* and *II* for sale at £40 I make a cheeky initial offer, they counter and we split the difference, agreeing on £35 + £3.99 P&P. I settle in to do some serious detective work, as I'm not 100% sure what I've just bought.

When they arrive, the research begins and on *Led Zeppelin I* there's a corrected matrix number and silver stripe at the bottom, which lets me know I've got a £100-ish record on my hands. On *Led Zeppelin II, The Lemon Song* is listed on the label. On later versions, this is changed to *Killing Floor*, so this one is worth somewhere in the £40 region.

I've noticed there are a few surface scratches on both of the records and, as I'm no expert when it comes to grading, I decide to call in Anthony Mabbutt, owner of Linyl Vinyl record

Nothing is straightforward when valuing Led Zeppelin vinyl – the only certainty is that demand still outstrips supply

shop in Accrington to give them the once over. He grades them as EX- and makes my day by agreeing with my valuation – and while it may have been more luck than judgement, my first dealing with the mighty Zep looks like being a profitable one.

While I've bought smart, the only albums to sell this week are five near-Mint Sky albums for a tenner, so I have my first cashflow problems, which couldn't come at a worse time because I spend the following Saturday poking around an auction viewing room and find the crate of my dreams. Do I have the money to buy it? I'm down to my last £25…

NINETY NINE AND A HALF (WON'T DO)

I put in an online bid and then spend a, literal, sleepless night hoping I'll land the biggest haul of my collecting career. The auction kicks off at 10am and I nervously refresh until my lot comes up and, with fees, I scoop the whole collection for a fraction over £22! I begin cataloguing my haul and there's a Mint *Scouse The Mouse* album by Ringo (later sells for £40), plus Creedence Clearwater's first album and *Willy And The Poor Boys*, both NM (£28).

I can't believe my luck when I see a 1963 UK pressing of The Beach Boys' *Surfin' Safari* (unsold). I also find Steve Howe's *Beginnings* in archive condition (unsold) and the boxed set of Michael Jackson reading *ET* (£27.70).

There's a couple of VG+ Hendrix albums including *Band Of Gypsys* (unsold) and *Lola* by The Kinks (£9.99). Billy Preston's album, *Encouraging Words*, which was produced by George Harrison (£50) is present and correct and there's a prog-rock version of *Lord Of The Rings* (unsold) and the *Rolling Stone* mag hoax album *The Masked Marauders* (unsold). The last record I flick through is *Matching Tie & Handkerchief* by Monty Python (£22.70).

There's also a bunch of records which are worth in the region of £10-25 each, such as NM copies of *Catch Bull At Four* and a 'pink rim' version of *Mona Bone Jakon* by the artist formerly known as Cat Stevens. I'm keeping a running mental tally as I work my way through the box, and it's now well north of £500. Oh, and there's also a signed Spandau Ballet 12" (£10). Result!

My luck continues and I can't stop finding vinyl. The cheapest is 49p and the most expensive just £3.33. In just 48 hours, I pick up albums by Roberta Flack, The Rolling Stones (£8.70), Booker T. & The M.G.'s and *Born To Run* by Springsteen. I may never have another week this good, so I just buy, buy, buy until my cash runs out. While I'm now penniless, I have about 80 records which, on paper at least, are worth in the region of £1,000.

John Prine's *Pink Cadillac* is the first to go, bringing in a pretty respectable £12.70, and that's shortly followed by a Creedence Clearwater compilation picked up in Oxfam (£22), Smith (£7) and *Born To Run* (£9.70). There's a steady stream of £9-10 sales, and when I bundle up *Led Zeppelin 1*, *2* and *Presence* I get an offer of £90, which I accept because I'm only paying £1 maximum eBay fees at this point.

LORD OF THIS WORLD

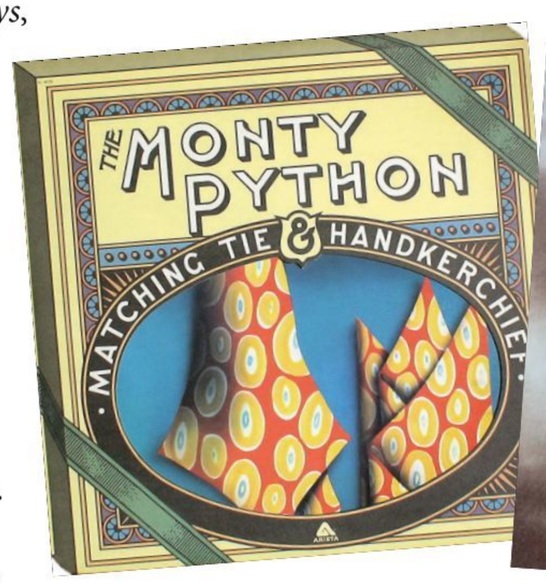
Now that my fund is approaching the £200 mark, I'm hoping I can snag myself a bargain copy of my bucket list item and after just a few days of searching I see a copy of *Master Of Reality* which ticks all my boxes, but oddly, it's located in the Russian Federation.

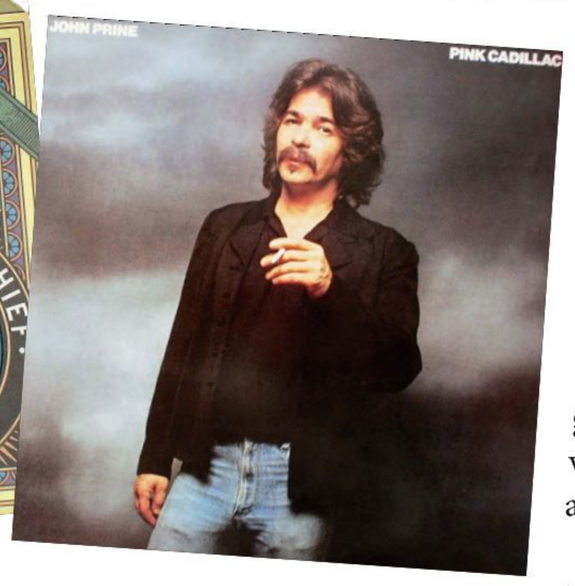
It's only just gone live and the starting bid is £150, but I know this will go through the roof as we approach the business end of the auction, so I decide to make an offer and throw my entire fund at it, bidding £185, plus £9.50 P&P. The seller accepts, but needs an extra £4 towards the postage, which I don't have, but then fate smiles and I get an offer of £28 for my two Creedence albums.

Two weeks later, I get home from work to find a package waiting for me and instead of undertaking a careful unwrapping, I go at it teeth first in a flurry of Sellotape and cardboard – and it's exactly what I want. The box is in great condition, the insert is complete, the poster is in good condition and the all-important vinyl looks as shiny as glass, with just a few wispy surface scratches.

I take it down to Linyl Vinyl for a professional evaluation and when the price is "somewhere around the £350 mark" I realise that it's over. Done. Finished. I have my number 1 bucket list album in my grubby little hands and this infuriating, long-winded hugely enjoyable journey has come to an end.

And you know what? You really can hear the difference! ●

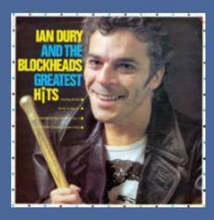




"Instead of carefully unwrapping, I go at it teeth first in a flurry of Sellotape and cardboard"

FAVOURITE FINDS

IAN DURY & THE BLOCKHEADS
GREATEST HITS



Everyone has got an album which acts like a time machine for them. It takes them back to a certain period in their life, and this compilation captures an era when punk was still dangerous, football players were real men and *Top of The Pops* still had some half decent music on it. Wonderful tunes and some of the most inventive lyrics to come out of the 1980s.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
BORN TO RUN

People will argue for years about the best album to come out of 1975. Was it *Blood On The Tracks*? How about *Wish You Were Here*? Bay City Rollers, you say? For me it was Springsteen, packaging up his tales of longing and redemption into a style of stadium-rock anthem which still sets the standard decades later.

DIGGING FOR VICTORY

Reggae is one of vinyl's most collectable genres, but getting your mitts on the good stuff is far from straightforward, as **Mark O'Shaughnessy** notes

This month, I'm going to turn the collecting spotlight on reggae and the absolutely infinite and mind-boggling 'conundrums' that collecting this genre regularly throws up. Strap yourselves in, this one is a bumpy ride…

Purists will hate me for saying this, but here goes: without Bob Marley's rise to fame in the early 1970s, there would not be as huge a reggae collecting market as there is now. Somebody said something very interesting within my earshot a few years back that stuck in my mind: "Don't trust anybody who says they don't like Bob Marley." I'd agree with that.

Reggae is right up there with the most collectable genres in the rare vinyl market – alongside rare punk 7"s, Northern Soul, rare folk and psych (currently THE top drawer collecting hot spot). Reggae was already alive and kicking before Bob's ascent to super-stardom around 1973/1974, but his amazing rise did one really important thing: it helped cross reggae over to the masses.

Once the door to that huge commercial potential had opened, it never closed again. Naturally, the wider global music industry jumped straight onto the gravy train and a whole host of varying reggae-flavoured copycat releases flooded the market.

Most UK major labels opened up reggae subsidiaries and before you knew it, the record business was overflowing with hundreds of reggae labels, all pushing out huge quantities of new releases. The pop charts were bursting at the seams with artists like Johnny Nash, Jimmy Cliff and Althea & Donna. This era was the very peak of record buying by volume, requiring sales of at least 100,000 to get even near the Top 10. Jamaica also upped its game massively and the myriad studios began pumping out so many records that saturation was quickly reached.

This was when the fun began for collectors. Having lived and worked in Brixton for many years, I was witness to this phenomenon and, post-boom, the fall-out from the many labels that operated out of Brixton was immense. I've bought out several labels' deadstock in my time and also purchased the archives of a couple of very well known local producers. Believe me when I tell you there are still many, many caches of incredible black gold in this musical goldmine. Go seek!

Collectors talk about 'reggae grading' and I can almost hear breaths being sharply inhaled. My take is that reggae grading should be the same as any other genre – if you're using the *Record Collector* grading scale or the Goldmine system, an NM/M record should be pretty much immaculate, whether it's death metal, Northern Soul or reggae. Sadly, many reggae dealers don't agree and I've pulled out lots of NM/M reggae records to be confronted by an item that is fit only for the skip.

It's a wise man who is able to definitively distinguish between a bona fide JA original pressed 7" and a later reissue, and I really struggle. I used to venture to Florida a lot on the vinyl hunt and Miami was full of reggae records due to its close proximity to the Caribbean – the shops were bursting at the seams with reggae.

Don't trust anybody who says they don't like Bob Marley

What everybody who collects JA reggae needs to know is that a lot of this product gets repressed every year using the same stampers. Using the same stampers and label colours and often the same label info, these represses flood out from Jamaica and it's only the keenest eye that can differentiate a 1970s black and white Coxsone from a 1960s black and white Coxsone. My advice is "if in doubt, leave it out" as what you are about to spend £50 on is sadly likely to be non-original.

With UK-issue reggae LPs, 12"s and 7"s, our job becomes much easier. UK pressings are distinguishable by stamped matrices in the dead wax and the presence of a perforated raised ridge around the label designed to prevent the stylus from running out onto the label. This was a feature of 99.99% of UK 7" pressings in the 1960s and 70s – if there is no such ridge, you are likely holding a repress.

Also, many 7"s made in the UK during the 1960s and 1970s were pressed with knock-out centres (for potential jukebox usage) and many UK reggae 7" buyers often 'dinked' their 7"s themselves, jukebox or no jukebox.

The reggae new reissue market is also huge, with France and Spain becoming big players in this field. Just make sure you have a listen to these records before buying because the sound reproduction can be very variable.

I'm intrigued to see where reggae goes next. There is a strong shift away from digital in JA and a lot of artists are going back to their roots and employing real musicians again (Jackie Mittoo, stand up!).

Like the mighty Tuff Gong himself often said, One Love. ●

TALKING SHOP

The Vinyl Whistle

LEEDS

Premier League ref Jon Moss felt that opening a record shop would be less stressful than officiating for 90 minutes on the weekend. He tells **John Earls** about his new store and why VAR might actually stand for Vinyl Addicted Referee

One of football fans' most common complaints about referees is how unapproachable they seem: they rarely explain controversial decisions and can come across as equally aloof as the multi-million-pound players whose careers they're in charge of for 90 minutes a week. Yet, if veteran Premier League ref Jon Moss is anything to go by, away from the pitch the man in the middle is actually a normal bloke.

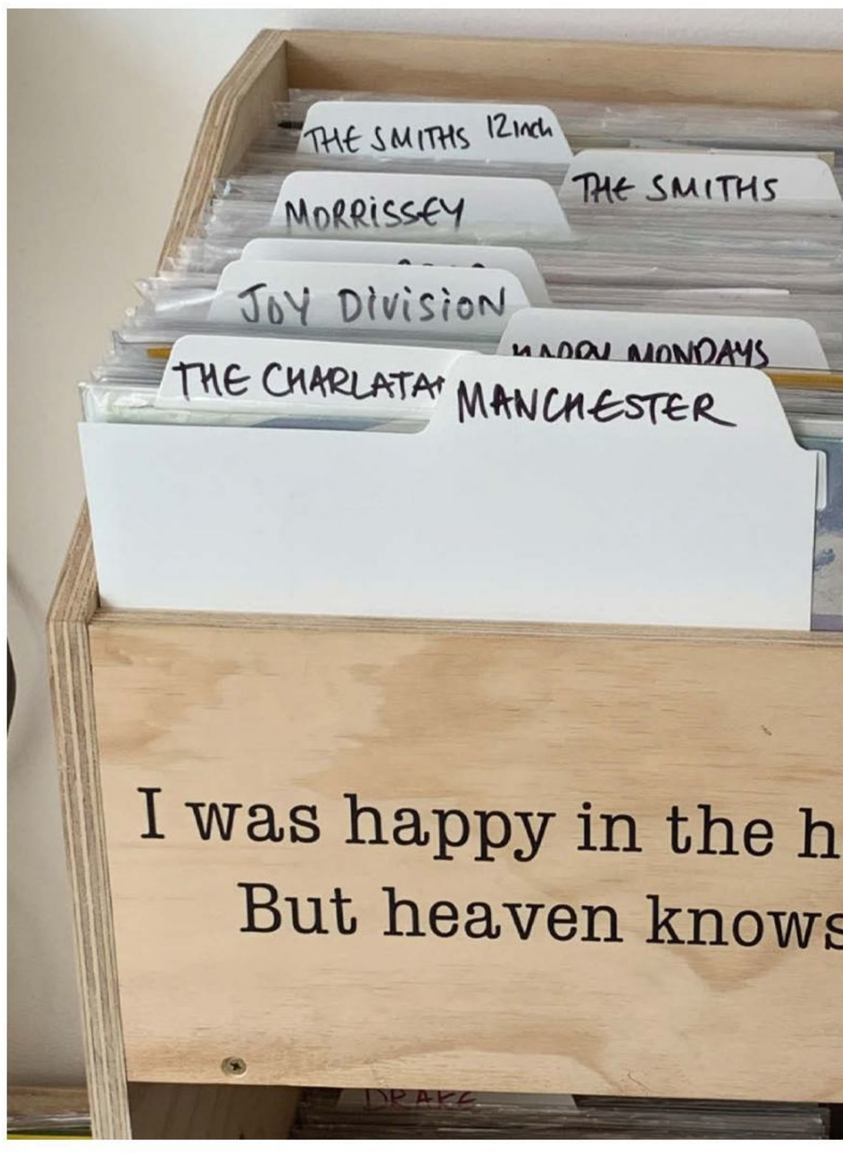
In July, Moss and his wife Julie opened The Vinyl Whistle, a small but welcoming second-hand shop in Leeds' student district Headingley. Its stock is testament to Moss' passion for indie – he's such an Oasis fan that The Vinyl Whistle must be the only record shop with a section devoted to Proud Mary, the long-forgotten Oldham rockers briefly signed to Noel Gallagher's Sour Mash label. It's not just indie big hitters Moss admires. He names newcomers Dylan John Thomas and Yellow Daze as current favourites, while his most recent gig was fast-rising local trio Working Men's Club ("They're from Todmorden, where I used to teach, so I was naturally drawn to them," notes Moss, a former headmaster).

The idea of opening a record shop came while on holiday in February, partially as a relief from the pressures of refereeing. "I've got quite a stressful job, and it's nice to have a chilled-out place away from that," Moss admits. He's only semi-joking when saying the shop is a chance to expand on his own collection, insisting "You can never have too many records." But he's evidently serious about wanting The Vinyl Whistle to succeed, detailing how he wants it to become "a destination point". Julie runs the shop's café, with coffee sourced from local ethical suppliers Leodis and cakes from a baker in nearby Pudsey. Leeds has a thriving record shop community already, but other shops are either in different suburbs or don't have the same type of stock. "I don't want to tread on anyone's turf," says Moss. "I ran the idea by my friend who runs Vinyl Fixx in Leeds and he said we'd be fine."

He's also keenly aware his own impressive indie credentials are too narrow for a whole shop. "We need to get the balance right," he admits. "Jazz is way out of my comfort zone, but people are asking about it. I want us to be a shop where, whatever you're obsessed by, we'll hopefully have something for you. That's helping to expand my own taste. I've never been into prog, but after some customers enquired about it, I've done my research. It turns out I really like Porcupine Tree."

THE MAN IN BLACK

With The Vinyl Whistle in Leeds' student community, Moss hopes "We'll be somewhere students can come with a hangover on Sunday and try to find the big tune they heard the night before." Of course, there's a problem with that: on many Sundays, Moss will be in charge of the big match on Sky Sports. And if not, he'll have reffed a game on Saturday. He's been training up staff "younger than me with different tastes" to run the shop when he's not there. He's also been spotted via his day job. On the first Saturday the shop opened, a group of lads on a pub crawl saw Moss through the display window. "They came



Pitch Perfect

It's not just the players who have their own pre-match playlist to get them in the mood for games. Each Premier League referee is assigned their own team of referee's assistants and a fourth official, who officiate together throughout the season. They also help Jon Moss compile a playlist they put on before a match.

"It tends to be primarily indie," Moss explains. "The teamsheets come at 2pm, so you have an hour to get ready. It's about mental preparation, getting ready in case there's a big decision to make in the first few seconds. I'm looking to get switched on, so it starts off slower – the acoustic version of Catfish And The Bottlemen's *7* is good. Then the playlist builds until I'm ready to go out. Songs are trigger points, so if I hear a certain song I know there's 15 minutes to go.

"I like to get pumped up, but obviously not so pumped up that I'm over the top! The Jam are great just before going out on to the pitch; *That's Entertainment* or *Going Underground*. Depending on how a game has gone, I like something heavy to come down to, AC/DC or *Paranoid* by Black Sabbath, before something mellow like Belle And Sebastian to finish."

LAURENCE GRIFFITHS/GETTY IMAGES

18+

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal, providing you various content: brand new books, trending movies, fresh magazines, hot games, recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price
Cheap constant access to piping hot media
Protect your downloadings from Big brother
Safer, than torrent-trackers

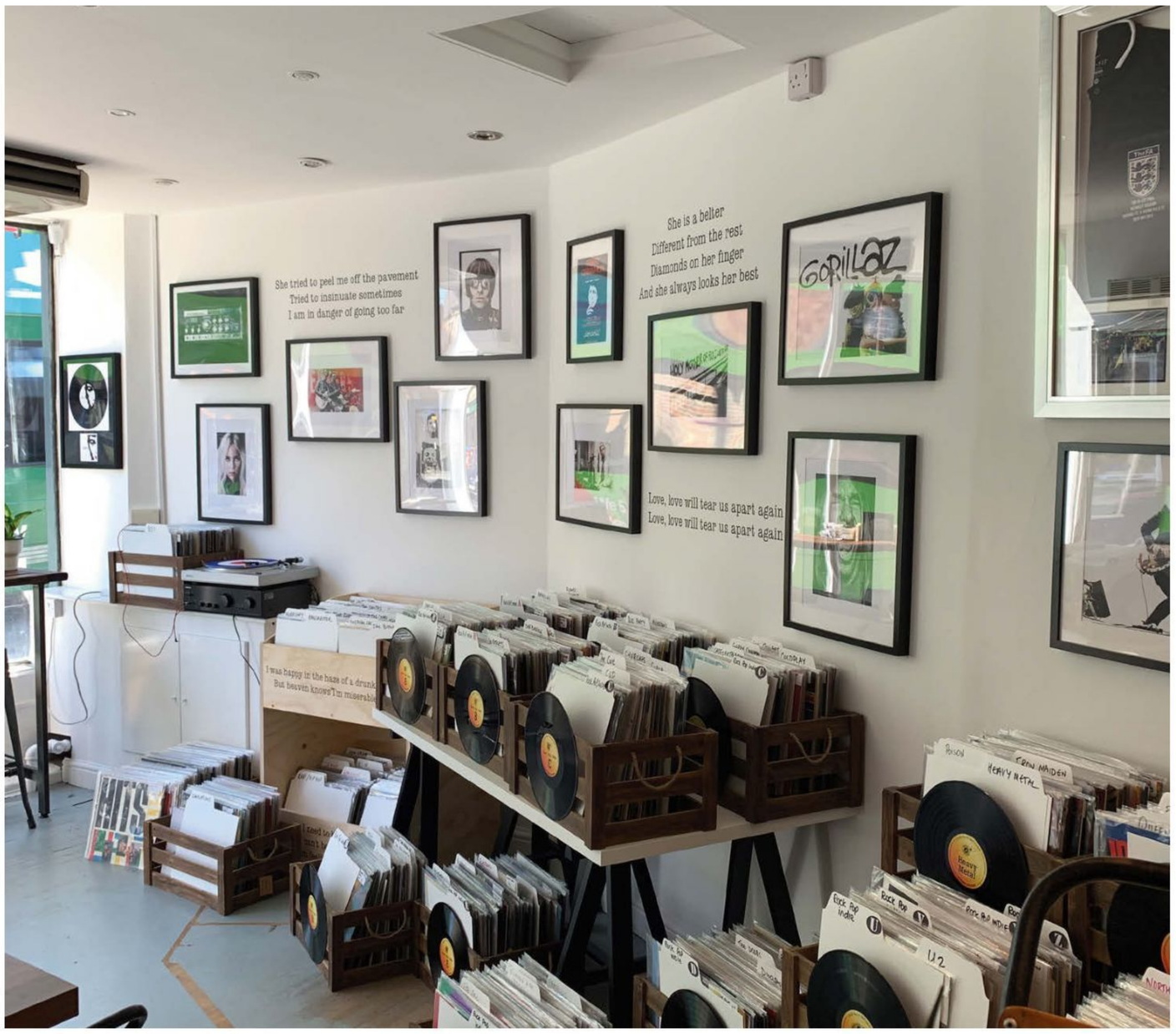
18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages
Brand new content
One site

AVXLIVE.ICU

AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open https://avxlive.icu



in and started chanting, but it was all good-natured," he emphasises. "I've deliberately not mentioned football in advertising the shop, but the connection is out there. And it's fine, away from the 90 minutes of a match, you can talk to people like any normal fan. You explain decisions and people are totally fine. If people want to come here to talk about football or music, that's great." It's an experience *Long Live Vinyl* can recommend. Moss has an air of calm authority, but he's surprisingly open and funny, quick to share his enthusiasm about all areas of football and music. On learning *LLV*'s writer is a Luton Town fan, Moss praises recent signing Callum McManaman, who previously played for his beloved Sunderland.

Away from the 90 minutes of a match, you can talk to people like any other fan

Moss' love of football and music are inextricably linked. The 48-year-old grew up in Sunderland and won a football scholarship to Connecticut, but quit after a year to instead study at Leeds uni, largely because he missed British music culture. Having become a New Model Army and The Mission fan at sixth-form college, he didn't enjoy how "students in America just don't talk about music over a pint like we do here – in general, they just go out to get smashed." Moss had qualified as a referee as part of his PE A-Level, keeping his hand in by occasionally officiating at kids' games, before he pursued it seriously after quitting semi-professional football at 29. "I was a central midfielder, and any of my teammates will tell you I was the least likely player to ever become a referee," he laughs. "I was always in trouble with referees! I was drifting down the ranks, not playing as well as I should, and I got sent off for kicking out at someone. In fairness, he kicked me first, but when I protested my red card the ref said, 'If you think you can do better, go ahead'." That comment led to the most successful career possible for a referee.

One of the few downsides of Moss' career is that he often has to cancel gigs at short notice. To help avoid being targeted by betting syndicates, referees only find out at 4pm on Monday which games they'll be officiating that week. Moss currently has tickets to see Pixies, Shed Seven and Gerry Cinnamon, but might not be able to make any of them. "Your social life is havoc during the season," Moss shrugs. "Thursdays are kind-of OK, but I can almost guarantee I'll get assigned a Europa League game when I'd been looking forward to a decent Thursday night gig!"

WHO'S YOUR FATHER?

For obvious reasons, refs are banned from having any personal social media accounts, so Moss has had to learn about advertising The Vinyl Whistle there, talking about possibly hiring a specialist marketeer. The shop's fantastic name helps. It's endearing to learn "The Vinyl Whistle" was dreamed up on a night out with fellow refs Kevin Friend, Graham Scott and Michael Oliver. "We'd been talking about something to do with 45 or 90 minutes, like Café 45," Moss recalls. "All the good names seemed taken, but once we thought about 'Vinyl… something', I think Graham suggested The Vinyl Whistle. It was obviously spot-on."

As well as steering clear of Twitter and Facebook, refs are encouraged not to socialise with players. But, after refereeing a pre-season

The Final Countdown

The only obvious sign of Jon Moss' football background on display at The Vinyl Whistle is the shirt he wore when he reffed the 2015 FA Cup final. It's framed and hung up on the wall above the A-Z indie racks.

"Refereeing the FA Cup final is the greatest honour for any English official," smiles Moss. "You can only referee it once, and it's a magical feeling." He recalls the days when the FA Cup final was the only game shown on TV all season, with coverage lasting all day, as well as trying to recreate the 1978 final as a seven-year-old with his mates immediately after Ipswich's 1-0 win over Arsenal.

Arsenal's 4-0 mauling of Aston Villa in 2015 was a fairly routine game, but Moss didn't mind one bit. "As an official, you want the game to go as smoothly as possible, rather than be influenced by a tough decision you've had to make," he insists. "Arsenal were stronger that day, and it made it easier for me to take in the moment. With two minutes to go, I was able to look round to see where my family were in the crowd and take in the atmosphere. The experience of getting to referee the final was all I'd hoped it would be."

friendly, Moss learned Burnley defender Ben Mee is a fellow indie head. "You'll mainly hear hip-hop and grime from the dressing room before a game," Moss reveals. "There's not many indie classics. I spoke to Ben Mee about records, and how he'd seen Blossoms recently. Ben knows about venues around Manchester and had been to Castleford Bowl a few times."

In that case, what if Mee had committed a second bookable offence but told Moss: "Look, I can get you a good deal on first pressings of Oasis vinyl?" Moss responds: "I'd 100% send him off. As a football fan, people want me to do my job professionally. Referees are football fans too, and we don't want mistakes to happen. But we can maybe negotiate those records after the game."

He's such an enthusiast, it's hard not to wish The Vinyl Whistle well, even if Moss has wrongly sent off your team's centre-half. As *LLV* hands over £55 for an array of Courteeners, Foals and Beautiful South albums, Moss fixes the glare of a man used to commanding international superstars. "You're not allowed to slag off referees when you go to a match anymore. You're one of us now." For learning about the human side of refs, it's a price worth paying. ●

Strangelove Music

From primitive Venezuelan art-pop to Swedish jazz and Portuguese avant-garde electronics, **Chris Parkin** discovers New Zealand's most esoteric reissue label

From labels digging out old sounds to the listeners buying it, the vinyl reissue market is, as any imprint's Bandcamp receipts will show, skewed heavily towards Europe and the US. You don't, for instance, get many (any?) reissue labels based in Burundi or Azerbaijan. There is, however, a thriving reissue scene on the other side of the world in New Zealand and Australia.

"Sarang Bang is a great little label oscillating between contemporary and archival jazz and experimental New Zealand music, and there's also Rain&Shine, which releases gospel-tinged, soul- and funk-influenced things," says Ben Stevens, founder of probably New Zealand's oddest reissue label, Strangelove Music. "My friends across the ditch run some great labels, too: Efficient Space, Left Ear Records, Crown Ruler."

In a warning to no-deal Brexiters, though, being far removed from your major market does come with some difficulties, such as how to get records pressed and posted to European and US buyers. But there are pros, too. "Being down here, I like being slightly detached from things; you can operate at your own pace," says Stevens. "Then, when it's convenient, the digital space reduces that distance to nothing anyway. And having a strong relationship with my distributor, Wordandsound in Hamburg, is key to keeping things viable."

This viability doesn't mean Stevens runs the label full-time, instead working around his role at an architectural practice. He's not complaining, as it's a dream realised: "since my teens, making compilation tapes and designing record label logos in school exercise books." Strangelove Music is his way of "curating the music that I love for other people; simply consuming records didn't seem enough". As for the esoteric nature of his output – think groovy, avant-garde 80s electronics from Lisbon's DWART and Venezuelan duo Frank Harris and Maria Marquez's primitive art-pop. As well as Portuguese and Venezuelan curios, this music runs the stylistic gamut from forgotten Australian synth-pop duo ARVO's 1984 album *Luna* to an upcoming compilation of outsider New Zealand music and a collection of tracks by Swedish jazz and new-wave 'genius' Sjunne Ferger, a favourite of spiritual jazz and 'fourth world' overlord, Don Cherry. "But there is an underlying pop sensibility in a lot of what I do," he promises, "and I love that idea of earworms."

"There's an underlying pop sensibility in a lot of what I do"

"You just need to be careful to not fall into a sort of 'Northern Soul' trap, where validity occurs simply based on obscurity," explains Stevens, acknowledging his magpie approach. "I do think that digital access to a wide range of music means people have a wider appetite for interesting and unusual music, and curiosity is a healthy thing."

"For me, releasing a record is like engaging in the slow food movement," he adds. "I sit back and digest music in a considered way, living with it for an extended period of time. I'll listen over and over to a proposed release, and I take solace in that." And if being far from the madding crowd means Antipodean reissue labels are able to unearth what they have so far, isolation obviously has its perks. ●

Reviews

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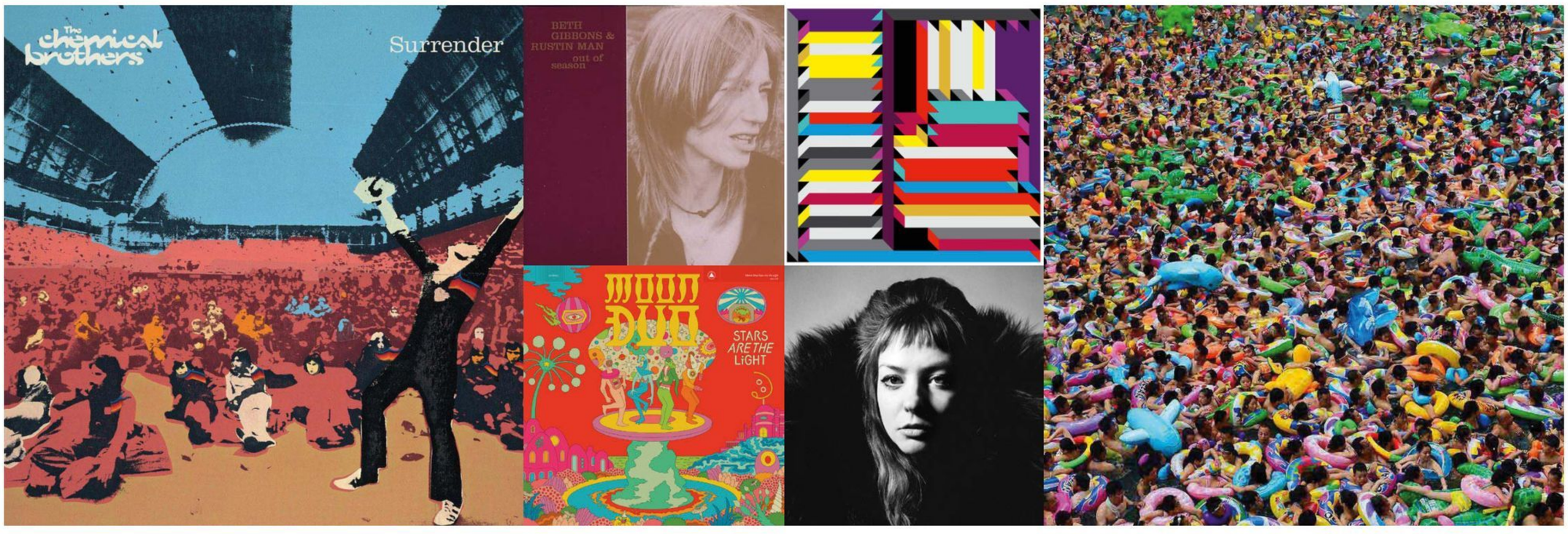
THE PRINCE ESTATE - AFSHIN SHAHIDI



Factory Records

USE HEARING PROTECTION 1978-1979
RHINO

The archetypal indie label's first year is preserved in boxset perpetuity via its first 10 numbered records and objects. **Gary Tipp** gives a FAC

IN THE BOX

FAC 1 Poster, May/June 1978
FAC 2 *The Factory Sample*, 2x7" compilation EP
FAC 3 Poster, October 1978
FAC 4 Poster, December 1978
FAC 5 A Certain Ratio, *All Night Party* 7" single, May 1979
FAC 6 Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark, *Electricity* 7" single, May 1979
FAC 7 Stationery, 1979
FAC 8 Menstrual Abacus aka The Factory Egg Timer (as an art print)
FAC 9 *No City Fun* aka *The Factory Flick*, 8mm film, March 1979 (DVD)
FACT 10 Joy Division *Unknown Pleasures*, June 1979

BONUS ITEMS
60-page book
Tiller Boys 12"
Joy Division and Tony Wilson interviewed by Mary Harron, 1979 (CD)

Given the label's insightfully arch, achingly cool habit of giving catalogue numbers to all of its creative output and not solely its vinyl releases, the history of Factory is best and most comprehensively told through its artefacts rather than solely through the records it sold.

This 40th anniversary boxset is released to mark the label's inception and is made up of the first 10 catalogue items. Of which four were vinyl, three were gig posters, one was a documentary, while the other two were office stationery (notepaper and envelopes) and a sculpture from Manchester artist Linder Sterling called The Menstrual Abacus, which is presented here as an A4 art print. Luckily, the Haçienda nightclub was as late as FAC51, or else it would have been a bugger to squeeze into the confines of this boxset.

Factory was launched in response to Manchester's fast-growing music scene, which had burgeoned in the wake of punk and thanks to the self-financed release of local heroes Buzzcocks' *Spiral Scratch*, which proved you didn't need the London-based major labels to make waves. In keeping with punk's DIY ethos, Tony Wilson, a local television presenter and cultural theorist, threw his life savings into the label that he called "an experiment in art", alongside the band manager and part-time actor Alan Erasmus.

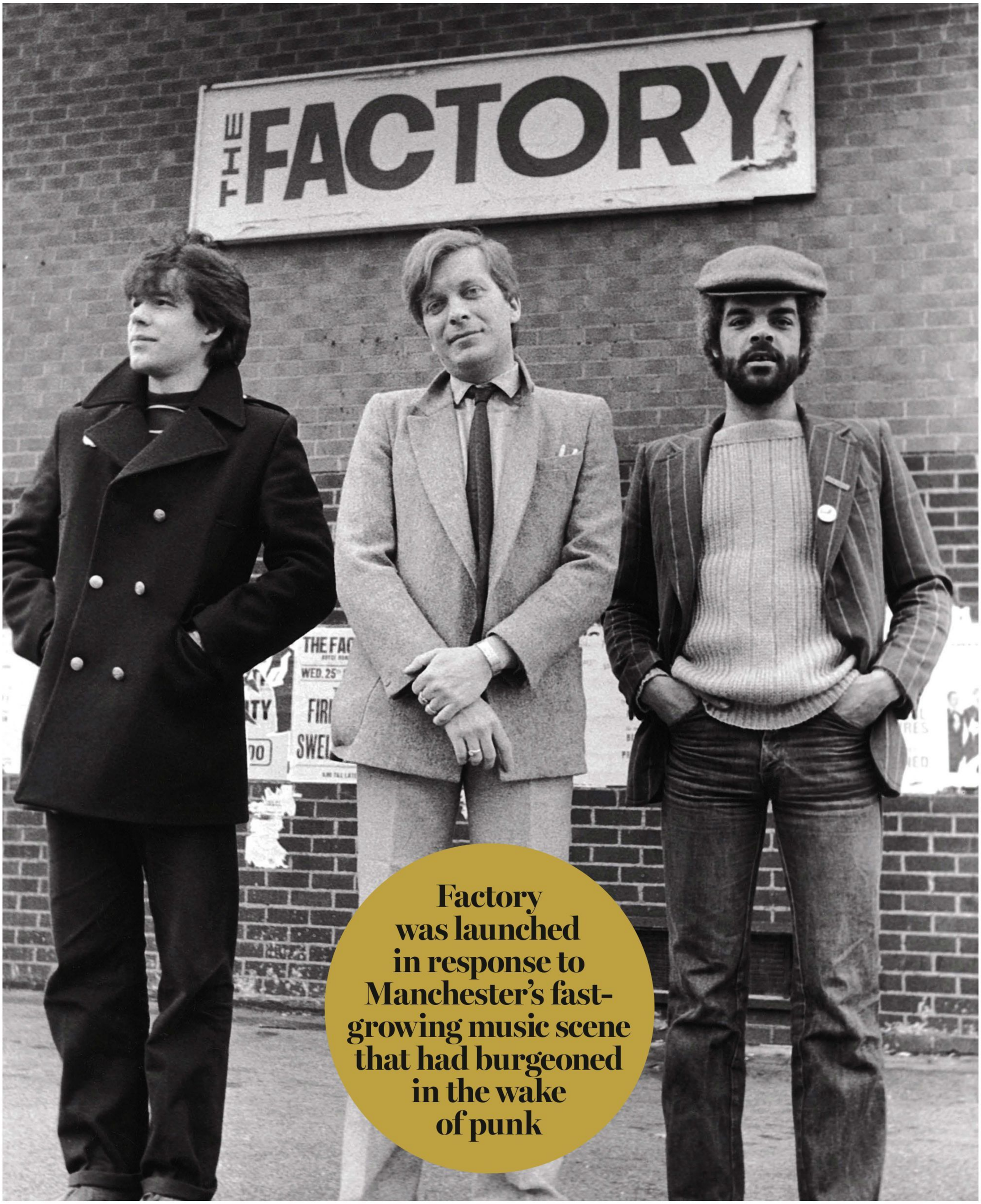
Use Hearing Protection's first 10 numbered records and objects roughly document Factory's first year and a bit, from a The Durutti Column gig poster dating back to May 1978 (FAC1) to Joy Division's imperious *Unknown Pleasures* (FACT10) released in June 1979.

Alongside Wilson and Erasmus, the presence of the label's two other main influencers is readily felt here. Graphic designer and the man responsible for the label's visual identity Peter Saville is understandably ubiquitous and it's his work we see not only on the record sleeves but also on the gig posters. To accompany FAC1, the typographic FAC3 announces a Joy Division/Cabaret Voltaire gig in October 1979, while FAC4 is a Factory listing for December 1979. Dig deeper and you'll discover that FAC4 was actually bashed out by Wilson in the style of Saville (who had missed his print deadline).

Alongside Saville, another man whose singular stamp is all over Factory's output is the maverick producer Martin Hannett, a crazed genius responsible for the sonic identity of vast swathes of Manchester's recorded output post punk. A drug-crazed genius, his mitts are all over the production controls of the Joy Division (*Digital & Glass*) and The Durruti Column tracks on the 2x7" FAC2, the emblematic, ultra-rare *A Factory Sample* EP. He is also the man in the booth behind the two other 7" singles included here, *All Night Party* by A Certain Ratio (FAC5) and the one-off release *Electricity* by badly dressed synth pioneers Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark (FAC6). He also shaped Joy Division's sound on *Unknown Pleasures* (FACT10).

Factory's first 10 numbered records and objects are bolstered by a 60-page book and a white label 12" by The Tiller Boys (originally earmarked as FAC3 but never released) together with a never-before-heard Joy Division interview, which proves to be a curiously addictive listen.

Factory went on to sell millions of records, run a crazily influential nightclub, earn and lose fortunes in equal measure and, ultimately, crash and burn. The early years were thrillingly creative, drawing a cautionary template for all the indie labels that followed. It was a special moment in time that *Use Hearing Protection* successfully date stamps with considerable flair.



Factory was launched in response to Manchester's fast-growing music scene that had burgeoned in the wake of punk

KEVIN CUMMINS

Prince

THE VERSACE EXPERIENCE (PRELUDE 2 GOLD)/
CHAOS AND DISORDER/EMANCIPATION

SONY LEGACY

Looking at the incredible 10LP package Warner have lined up for the deluxe reissue of *1999*, you have to feel sorry for Sony. Marking Prince's transition from Warner to releasing music on his own, these mid-90s albums are the third batch of Sony releases of Prince's later work. They're doing a good solid job of at least getting everything out there after Prince's eccentric approach to releasing albums – the first vinyl release of triple album *Emancipation* across 6LPs at £80 is reasonable value. Yet you can't help but feel that, once the post-Warner era is all released formally, Sony will go right back to the start and begin compiling the kind of deluxe packages Prince's golden period is finally now receiving.

The latest batch is mostly for hardcore Prince devotees rather than casual fans. As its title suggests, *The Versace Experience (Prelude 2 Gold)* is a half-hour preview of *The Gold Experience*. Originally released as a cassette given away at Paris Fashion Week in 1995, the snippets and alternative mixes act as an early form of hip-hop mixtape culture. *Chaos And Disorder* was Prince's final album under his Warner contract. He said it was intended to be recorded as quickly as possible, but Prince was always a quick worker: his statement seems an admission not much thought went into slapdash songs made so he could escape Warner. *Emancipation* is the pick: mad, sprawling, an hour too long. But among the self-indulgence there are enough moments of blissful freedom and a sense of wonder to make its newfound availability highly tempting. ***John Earls***

7

Marvin Gaye

WHAT'S GOING ON LIVE

MOTOWN/UMC

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

An historic day deserves a suitably landmark performance, and here it is: the greatest singer of all time delivering his masterpiece live in concert. It's 1 May, 1972 and Motown's most fêted star has returned to his hometown of Washington DC for 'Marvin Gaye Day'. After speaking to students at his former school and being handed keys to the city, Marvin's performance later that day at the Kennedy Center marked a return to the stage after a four-year hiatus following the on-stage collapse and subsequent death of singing partner Tammi Terrell. An opening 60s medley of nine tracks in just 13 minutes harks back to his former showbizzy entertainer role. You yearn to hear more of a supremely funked-up *I Heard It Through The Grapevine* and *Ain't Nothing Like The Real Thing*, but it's clear Marvin's moved on creatively. The real meat here is an expansive exploration of the *What's Going On* LP in full. You'd never know Gaye suffered from crippling stage fright on this evidence; from the whoops of *Right On* and wonderfully measured *Wholy Holy*, he seems supremely in control of both his own vocals and an intuitive band. A relaxed Marvin deconstructs *Inner City Blues*, prompting his band leader to rearrange it on the fly. With musicians this good, they pull it off without missing a beat. A snafu switching over reel to reel tapes means *Mercy Mercy Me* is absent, but the power of this show, and its significance in Marvin's career, can't be diluted. *Steve Harnell*

9

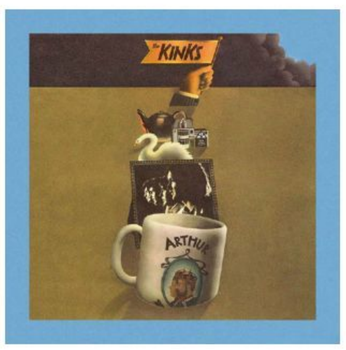
THE PRINCE ESTATE - AFSHIN SHAHIDI / MOTOWN RECORDS ARCHIVE

The Specials
SPECIALS
2 TONE/CHRYSALIS

A charity shop staple and already reissued in 2015, any halfway casual Specials fan probably already owns their debut album. Although sounding better than ever, it's debatable whether this new half-speed master is totally worth the upgrade. The start of releases for 2 Tone's 40th anniversary, at least it's another excuse to revisit an album which has rarely been rivalled for energy and righteous fury in the intervening 40 years. Some of the lyrics now seem wincingly misogynist, but the sentiment that modern Britain should and must be better than it is certainly still hits home, as does Elvis Costello's brutal no-frills production. Jerry Dammers might disagree, but *Specials* still sits excellently as a companion to the unexpectedly brilliant recent comeback album *Encore* in showing that there are few to touch them. **8**
John Earls

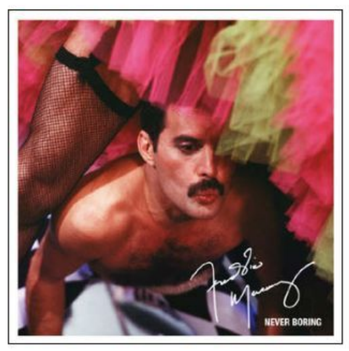
The Kinks
ARTHUR
BMG

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE



A concept album about one man's decision to emigrate as Britain considered entering the common market, you say? Ray Davies' 1969 iconic concept LP may be celebrating its 50th anniversary, but it's as pertinent as ever. Punchy opener *Victoria* lampoons old-world puritan values, but there's more bite to anti-military satire *Yes Sir, No Sir* and the reportage realism of *Some Mother's Son*. The breezy *Australia* makes emigration sound positively irresistible; its wig-out coda is The Kinks at their instrumentalist best. Equally impressive is the baroque *Young And Innocent Days*. An exhaustive 88-track 4CD boxset includes a host of extras, including a 'lost' Dave Davies solo album. The 2LP vinyl version features a selection from Dave's record, plus BBC Session cuts. A compelling take on this superb concept piece. **9**
Steve Harnell

Freddie Mercury
NEVER BORING
MERCURY/UNIVERSAL



The press release for this triple-vinyl, hardback book and DVD extravaganza is pretty quick to communicate how recent Queen biopic *Bohemian Rhapsody* has taken just shy of a billion box office dollars. Also mentioned is that its official soundtrack is Queen's biggest seller in 38 years. What other artist would be as keen to shout about financial successes so loudly? But this bravado is entirely in keeping with a band whose heart and soul was, and still is, Freddie; a man so flamboyant that he once performed an encore from the shoulders of Darth Vader. The three discs comprise a solo best-of, a remaster of Mercury's solo debut *Mr. Bad Guy* and a reworked version of 1988 collaboration with Montserrat Caballé, *Barcelona*. Queen completists will, of course, lap it up. Others may find some of it a little… boring. **6**
Ben Wardle

Scott Walker
SCOTT 4
UNIVERSAL/MERCURY

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

It's not surprising *Scott 4* didn't sell 50 years ago: Instead of a tracklisting on the back, prospective buyers got a quotation from Albert Camus. Scott fans may have had nightmares about album opener *The Seventh Seal*, a blow-by-blow transcript of Ingmar Bergman's 1957 arthouse classic. Would Engelbert Humperdink have sung about playing chess with the grim reaper? This was the first Walker solo album featuring exclusively self-penned songs, and as such it manages to surpass *1*, *2* and *3*. You'd be hard pressed to find a break-up captured better than on *On Your Own Again*, a tale told in two icy chapters orchestrated by Wally Stott. John Franz's production is masterful, especially on the funky Stalin romp *The Old Man's Back Again*, where Walker scats over a bass as resonant as that on Gainsbourg's *Histoire de Melody Nelson*. **9**
Ben Wardle

The Chemical Brothers
SURRENDER
UMC

Finally entering the deluxe reissue market for the 20th anniversary of "The one with *Hey Boy Hey Girl* on", The Chemical Brothers' start is frustrating. The *Secret Psychedelic Mixes* disc, including a hypnotic 21-minute take on *Out Of Control*, is just brilliant. So, too, is the DVD of the Brothers' headline Glastonbury show from 2000. But the fourth LP includes only five of the 11 B-sides and remixes of the 3CD equivalent. Cost of the CDs: £40. Cost of the 4LP box: £85. At least those mixes include Soulwax's incendiary *Hey Boy Hey Girl* remix, which is almost worth £85 in itself. But, crucially, not quite. Considering the original classic album can be picked up cheaply, at the new asking price *Surrender* needed to be far more comprehensive. A missed opportunity. **7**
John Earls

Beastie Boys
PAUL'S BOUTIQUE
CAPITOL/UNIVERSAL

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Listening to the Beasties' debut, *Licensed To Ill*, in 2019 is like hearing *Tell Us The Truth* by Sham 69: fun but only enjoyable via irony and nostalgia. *Paul's Boutique* on the other hand can still be enjoyed like *Never Mind The Bollocks*. Three years after the debut, 1989's Beasties carried the whiff of a stale joke. Lead-off single *Hey Ladies* didn't help, suggesting the band's fratboy misogyny was still intact. It sold 100,000 copies, compared to the multi-million selling debut. Time, however, has revealed its depths. Aside from the wit and imagination of the words, the power rests with producers The Dust Brothers, Matt Dike and Mike Ross. They weave such a seamless tapestry that it's easy to imagine Mike D, MCA and Ad-Rock jamming as a three-piece in the studio as they did later on *Check Your Head*. **9**
Ben Wardle

Dusty Springfield
DUSTY IN MEMPHIS
UNIVERSAL/MERCURY

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Dusty's now 50-year-old classic has been reissued many times before. The 1983 *In Memphis Plus* added four extra tracks because "the album sounded much weaker without them." Quite what the songwriters (Goffin/King, Mann/Weil, Bacharach/David and Randy Newman), backing singers The Sweet Inspirations, string arranger Arif Mardin and producer Jerry Wexler would have had to say about that doesn't bear thinking about. This is a Scorsese movie of an album, meticulously put together with love, care and of course, soul. That it's Dusty's finest is an understatement. Her vocals – recorded later in New York due to nerves – are a benchmark for female soul singers black or white. The song choices (*Breakfast In Bed, Son of A Preacher Man, Just A Little Loving*) and the fragile power of her voice make it one of the sexiest records, too. ***Ben Wardle***

9

Super Furry Animals
GUERRILLA
BMG

For *Guerrilla*'s 20th anniversary, having Pete Fowler's gorgeous psychedelic artwork as a gatefold sleeve is glorious. But, unfortunately, BMG may have missed an opportunity with the vinyl offering. The Furrys are making much of the CD/digital extras: six B-sides and 20 demos. There's no chance to own that package on vinyl, and we don't get the original album's two hidden tracks. It spoils the enjoyment of one of SFA's finest outings. Running from the infectious hit *Do Or Die* and yearning ballad *Northern Lites*, they were remarkably prescient in detailing phone addiction in the acid burblings of *Wherever I Lay My Phone (That's My Home)* way back in 1999. It's just a shame BMG didn't think to give vinyl buyers the chance to add in quality pop B-sides such as *Rabid Dog* to the bargain. *John Earls*

6

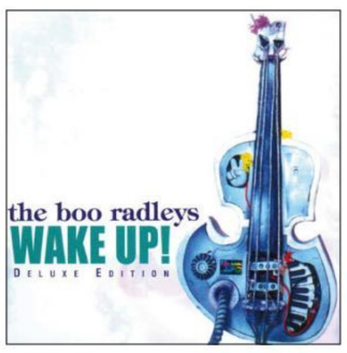
Gang Of Four
ENTERTAINMENT!
RHINO

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Adhering strictly to the didactic yet funky manifesto of "no corny lyrics, no obvious melodies and no change of key", Gang Of Four were the quintessential UK post-punk band. Fiercely anti-rock, the angular, intellectual dance-punk on debut album *Entertainment!* was an inspired rejection of the 1-2-3-4 blinkered thrash that had gone before. Wildly influential, its bass sound alone was the cornerstone of the Red Hot Chili Peppers' career (but we'll forgive it for that). Standout tracks include the existential almost-hit *At Home He's A Tourist*, the polemic power pop of *I Found That Essence Rare* and the epic feedback finale of *Anthrax*. *Entertainment!* remains one of the shiniest, most jagged jewels in post-punk's crown. Despite the band's strident anti-capitalist stance, this essential sonic treasure is now available on limited edition blood red vinyl. ***Gary Tipp***

10

The Boo Radleys
WAKE UP!
MUSIC ON VINYL



Probably the best 90s band, along with Elastica, yet to show any urge to reform, The Boo Radleys' absence means their myth has faded. Although sprawling epic *Giant Steps* and the snarling *C'mon Kids* would be better entry points, until they're reissued Music On Vinyl's reliably excellent pressing of the Scousers' commercial peak is still damned fine. Mega-hit *Wake Up Boo!* is misleading on an album which is more in keeping with its predecessor *Giant Steps*' shimmering psych. True, the brassy *It's Lulu* is another snappy slice of uplifting pop, but the woozy *Joel* and sparse *Reaching Out From Here* are more typical. Martin Carr's gnarled songwriting was always out of step with Britpop and the jagged edges have aged better than many contemporaries. Not that you'll get chance to revisit them with the band anytime soon. *John Earls*

8

John Coltrane
BLUE WORLD
IMPULSE

In what was an unprecedented move at the time, when John Coltrane was asked in 1964 to provide the music for Québécois filmmaker Gilles Groulx's *Le Chat Dans Le Sac*, he took Classic quartet members Jimmy Garrison, Elvin Jones and McCoy Tyner along with him to Van Gelder Studios in New Jersey to re-record some of his most famous work. Just 10 minutes of 'Trane cuts were eventually used in the film, and while this is billed as an unreleased LP, most serious fans will be familiar with the essence of its contents. Three takes of *Village Blues* and two of *Naima* make up the bulk of the 37-minute running time; in their various guises, the hushed atmospherics of both tunes shine. Coltrane keeps his most aggressive playing reined in and Garrison gets his moment in the sun via the wriggling *Traneing In*. ***Steve Harnell***

7

Bert Jansch
AVOCET
EARTH RECORDINGS

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Listeners who find the strident vocals of Jansch a little overpowering may discover that this album is the one to open up his rich back catalogue. Released in 1979, it exists in its own world of violin, flute and mandocello (a larger, basier mandolin) far removed from the Blondie, Police and Gary Numan of the day. The stripped-down trio of Jansch, Martin Jenkins and ex-Pentangle pal and ubiquitous folk double bassist Danny Thompson converse musically over a handful of instrumentals all named after British wading and sea birds. The title track's simple repeated guitar motif takes up the entirety of Side 1 and evokes images of 1970s BBC children's TV or source material for Lemon Jelly, depending on your age. With Hannah Alice's beautiful artwork and on limited coloured vinyl to celebrate its 40th year, this is a must buy. *Ben Wardle*

9

Tanita Tikaram
TO DRINK THE RAINBOW 1998-2019
NEEDLE MYTHOLOGY

Let's say this loudly, because she's unlikely to: with her voice the definition of melancholy, Tanita Tikaram is one of Britain's most unheralded artists. Existing in the shadows since 1988's globe-conquering *Ancient Heart*, she shines like a Home Counties Norah Jones on this collection of post-major label work. Her vocals ache alongside acoustic guitar and piano as she delivers *Love Is Just A Word*'s painful truths, while *Cool Waters* is a warm bath, its jaunty arrangements the accompanying sense of luxurious freedom. *Trouble* boasts early Calexico's dusty desert feel, and her husky tones suit *Amore Si*'s Spanish flavours, yet *I Think Of You* depicts obsessive, lingering love, culminating in a glorious, French-flavoured singalong. She's joined by another misunderstood star, Jennifer Warnes, on the widescreen *Only The Ones We Love*. ***Wyndham Wallace*** **8**

Various Artists
SOUL SHACK TIME & PLACE
CHARLY RECORDS

Another stellar compilation from the reliably excellent Club Soul desk at Charly Records. Following Charly's series celebrating the game-changing North West clubs of the Northern Soul scene, Midlands DJs Neil Rushton and Roger Hayward are behind the decks this time. Theirs is a diverse selection, from Chicago soulstress Jean Shy's ultra-rare *I'm A Bad Go Getter* through the New Orleans R&B of Eddie Bo's *Our Love (Will Never Falter)* to Gil Scott-Heron and Brian Jackson's seminal commentary on alcoholism *The Bottle*. Ricky Allen's *Cut You Loose* is a 165-second thrill ride, but perhaps the highlight is the red-hot musicianship of the Ohio Players tearing through Northern Soul belter *Love Slipped Through My Fingers*. It's pressed on 180g vinyl with sleevenotes from Rushton. *Gary Walker* **8**

Lee 'Scratch' Perry
BATTLE OF ARMAGIDEON
MUSIC ON VINYL

With a vast discography that spans the decades and is still being added to, it's difficult to know whether this 1986 album can safely be labelled middle-period Perry or not. What is certain is that the expected drop in quality that most artists experience over an extended period of time is rarely applicable to the diminutive dub genius. Backed by The Upsetters and subtitled *Millionaire Liquidator, Battle Of Armagideon* is an immaculately produced, bass-heavy slice of perfectly realised dub. The track *I Am A Madman* reveals that Scratch is more aware of his surroundings than some would credit him, while *Sexy Lady* is no longer the track to choose if trying to impress a first date. The album falls short of the 'essential purchase' category, solely because so much else of his output truly is. This limited edition run is resplendent on orange vinyl. ***Gary Tipp*** **7**

Jason Isbell And The 400 Unit
JASON ISBELL AND THE 400 UNIT/ HERE WE REST
THIRTY TIGERS

Jason Isbell's debut album with The 400 Unit dates back to 2009. Isbell may be a changed man from this period of his life, now sober and with multiple Grammys to his name, but his sonic approach is largely the same: combining sensitive, evocative songs with a country-rock band behind him. The remastered version has given the production a good polish. Isbell's second album with the band captures him in a more melodic mode. The opening glide of *Alabama Pines* remains one of his sweetest songs and sets the tone for an album that is a love letter to the American South. *Daniel Dylan Wray* **8**

Beth Gibbons & Rustin Man
LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE
OUT OF SEASON
ISLAND/UMC

Back in 2002, the reclusive singer teamed up with former Talk Talk bassist Paul Webb to create an intimate album of delicate beauty. Far removed from the trip-hop sampledelica of *Dummy*, even though Portishead guitarist Adrian Utley was also in the studio, this bittersweet collection uses the full range of Gibbons' wonderful vocal talent. Drawing on folk and jazz influences ranging from Nick Drake to Billie Holiday via Nina Simone, *Out Of Season*'s pervading atmosphere is both pastoral and autumnal. Album highlights include the enigmatic opener *Mysteries* and the soulful *Tom The Model*. First-press copies of this highly coveted album regularly swap hands at the £100 mark, so this reissue, remastered at Abbey Road, is timely and welcome. ***Gary Tipp*** **9**

Various Artists
2 TONE TREASURES
2 TONE/CHRYSALIS

The Special AKA barged their way into the national consciousness after an explosive appearance on *Top Of The Pops* catapulted their debut single *Gangsters* into the upper reaches of the charts. This was May 1979 and the ska revival had truly arrived, bringing with it regular forays into the Top 40 from 2 Tone label artists such as Madness (*The Prince*), The Beat (*Tears Of A Clown*) and The Selecter (*On My Radio*). Lovingly art directed by Jerry Dammers, this chronological 7" boxset of 12 vital releases, recut from the original masters, kicks off with The Special AKA's debut single and works its way through to *Nelson Mandela*. The first 2,500 copies carry a limited edition postcard signed by the usurped head Special, after which his rollerball must have run out of ink. *Gary Tipp* **8**

Elbow

GIANTS OF ALL SIZES
POLYDOR

Elbow return with a hard-hitting masterpiece that in Guy Garvey's own words is "bleak, but with a huge heart". **John Earls** finds solace in the band's most definitive statement yet

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

TRACKLIST

1 Dexter & Sinister
2 Seven Veils
3 Empires
4 The Delayed 3:15
5 White Noise White Heat
6 Doldrums
7 My Trouble
8 On Deronda Road
9 Weightless

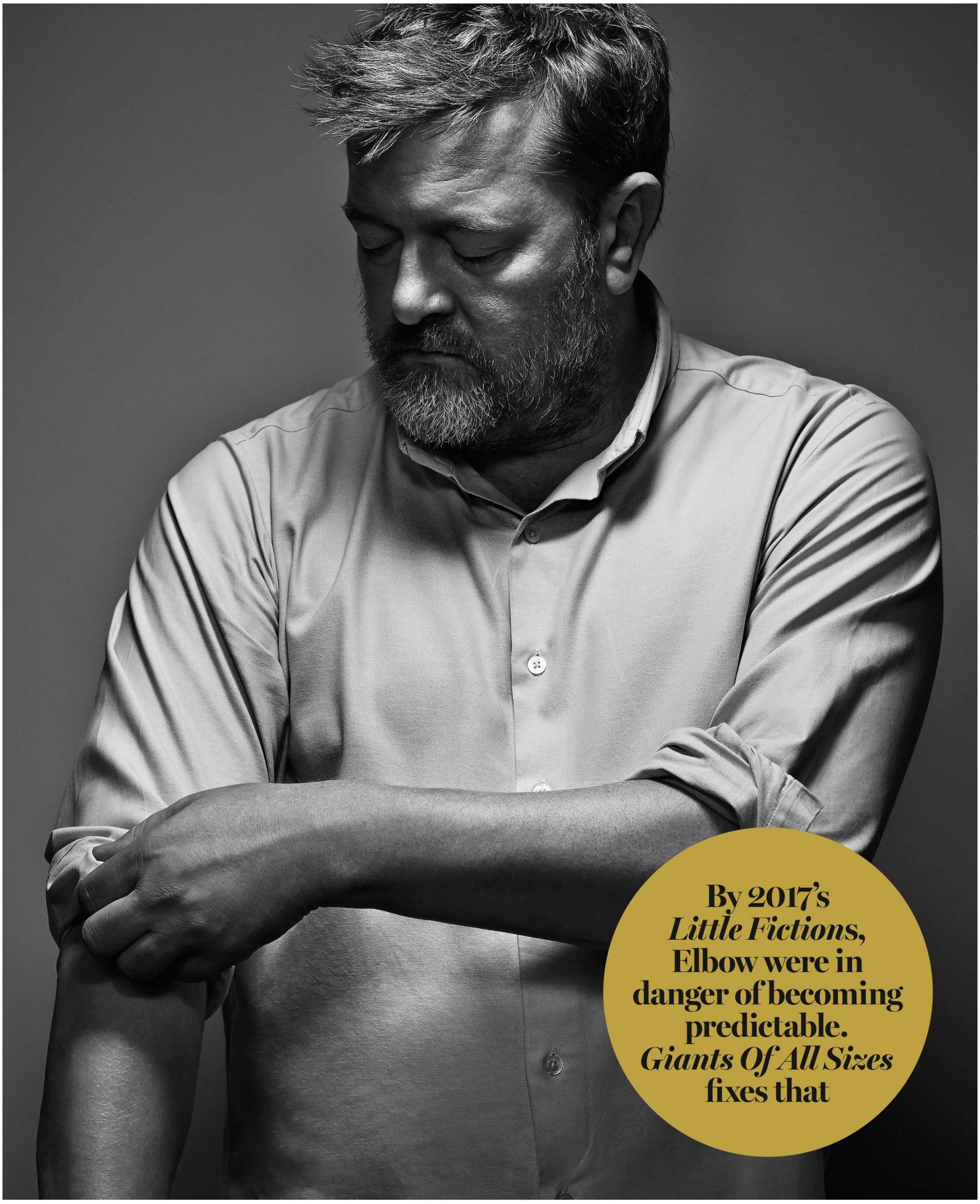
As Elbow tell *Long Live Vinyl* elsewhere this month, you can largely divide their career into Old Elbow and New Elbow. Since *The Seldom Seen Kid* made them massive, you can rely on Elbow to provide solace, but in a less experimental fashion than on early singles like *Newborn* and *Forget Myself*. Their gig setlists have largely shunned pre-fame material in favour of the music that works best for a communal mood. You can't blame them for it, and their last two albums reached No 1. But, by 2017's *Little Fictions*, Elbow were in danger of becoming predictable. *Giants Of All Sizes* fixes that, a refreshing and bracing record both musically and in Guy Garvey's wracked lyrics.

If it wasn't their stated aim, these nine songs hark back to debut album *Asleep In The Back*, when Elbow were equally obsessed by Peter Gabriel and Massive Attack. With the four band members developing song ideas on their own, there's a variety of styles. If Craig Potter apparently sometimes went too far in trying to get hip-hop production into the band, *On Deronda Road* is still a very modern love song, its bubbling beats more Four Tet than *One Day Like This*. Bassist Pete Turner's *Doldrums* is an unsettling and fraught spaghetti western, as Garvey and his Brixton studio neighbour Chilli Chilton's vocals do battle like Tom & Jerry by way of *Saw*. *Seven Veils* apparently started out sounding like Gnarls Barkley's *Crazy*, but has ended up as rumbling gospel with one of Garvey's most beautiful vocal performances in a career full of them.

Best of all is *White Noise White Heat*. Elbow's last full-throttle rocker *Grounds For Divorce* was spiritually a convivial drinking anthem. Not here – Garvey's fury at the Tory government's Russian dolls of vindictive rulers and his despair at his music's ultimate inability to change anything makes for a stunning angry howl. For an album that starts with the line "I don't love Jesus anymore", *White Noise White Heat* is an Old Testament warning of the apocalypse if mankind doesn't sort out its morals. Even when staying in their recent comfort zone, guitarist Mark Potter's *The Delayed 3:15* is a sparse John Martyn-inflected rumination, before the moving *Weightless* ends the album on a hard-fought note of redemption.

In marrying their established gift for offering the listener succour to a reminder that they're capable of pretty much anything when they want, *Giants Of All Sizes* is the definitive Elbow album. In releasing the seven-minute twister *Dexter & Sinister* as its first single, the band have made it clear they're happy to provide empathy one pair of headphones at a time rather than arena by arena. It's an album to lose yourself in, in solitude. Do so. You'll emerge wiser for it.

9


By 2017's
Little Fictions,
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danger of becoming
predictable.
Giants Of All Sizes
fixes that

Big Thief

TWO HANDS

4AD

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

The "Celestial Twin" to May's *U.F.O.F.* album arrives only five months later, the fourth release in as many years from Brooklyn's alt-folk workaholics. If that level of prolific output suggests a lack of quality control, forget such notions, as *Two Hands* is arguably the band's best collection yet and more immediate than its recent sibling. It's also a record focused heavily on the impending climate crisis we face and man's ruthless destruction of Mother Nature, even if that line of attack is sometimes shrouded in metaphor. It's pretty overt in the excellent, folky anti-anthem *Forgotten Eyes*, and *The Toy*, on the latter the band's vocalist and chief songwriter Adrianne Lenker mournfully noting, "What a tomb we're building here/ In the sphere, that's where we'll all die". On *Shoulders*, too, she implores us to "Please wake up" from collective inaction. The pinnacle is *Not*, an uncomfortable, smouldering piece of lyrical repetition split apart by a gloriously unpolished guitar solo. A mainstay of the band's live sets for some time, they finally nailed a recorded version at Sound City in LA after the initial album sessions in El Paso, Texas had wrapped up. Be thankful they did – it's one of the most thrilling pieces of music you'll hear all year. Endless touring and ceaseless writing has brought Big Thief to the point where they share a near-telepathic musical connection and Lenker stands as one of the most thoughtful, potent writers of her generation, determined to keep challenging herself. How far they've come in just four years – and this is just the beginning. *Gary Walker*

9

Foals

EVERYTHING NOT SAVED WILL BE LOST (PART 2)

TRANSGRESSIVE/WARNER

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

When *Part 1* was released in March, Foals' claims that its successor would be the rockier album seemed dubious: the songs on the initial record rocked hard. Surely, having been away for a while, the more commercially sensible move would be to release the record with the most immediate impact first? In short, commercial imperative be damned. As lead singles *The Runner* and live favourite *Black Bull* have hinted at, *ENSWBL2* is an extended, relentless punch to the gut to follow *Part 1*'s frantic tease.

Once shimmering instrumental prelude *Red Desert* is dispensed with, the first side in particular is as triumphant as anything in Foals' catalogue. *The Runner* and *Wash Off* are heavy funk like RHCP finally opting to use their powers for good, while *Black Bull* and *Like Lightning* are straight-up classic rock monsters in a manner rarely done so skilfully outside of QOTSA anymore. Side two is more atmospheric, with the slo-mo *10,000 Feet* a menacing bridge into the more straightforward ambience of *Into The Surf*. The much-talked-about 10-minute finale *Neptune* actually takes a couple of minutes to get going but, once it does, seems set to end Foals' gigs for the rest of their career.

The decision to wait until the full picture was unveiled makes sense after all. With a whole gig's worth of new music released this year alone, there's nothing to stop them at next year's festivals. An already mighty band just elbowed their way into greatness. *John Earls*

9

MICHAEL BUISHAS

Richard Dawson
2020
WEIRD WORLD

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

We live in the strangest times, citizens of Brexitland, buffeted by austerity, caught between exhaustion and exasperation. How to write about such an angry fever dream of a place? Following up his medieval-themed *Peasant*, Richard Dawson's solution is to zoom in on the everyday. The result is a state-of-the-nation album rooted not in sweeping political statements, but in storytelling and in the specific, the grainy, grimy details of everyday life. Here are songs where an anxious jogger rubs shoulders with a harassed warehouse worker, and where a lad worries about his dad criticising his performance in a football match. As for Dawson's music, it's never been more accessible and melodic, albeit these are wordy, intricately arranged, folk-tinged songs fronted by the gruffest of Geordie voices. Rich, vivid, extraordinary. ***Jonathan Wright***

9

Mark Lanegan Band
SOMEBODY'S KNOCKING
HEAVENLY RECORDINGS

With his voice as tough as gravel laid atop a base of granite, Mark Lanegan could easily have spent his entire career fronting hard-rock bands. Instead, following the disbandment of Screaming Trees – always one of the more interesting grunge acts – his career has been full of unexpected moves, most obviously his collaboration with Isobel Campbell. Along the way, he has rightly developed a reputation as a subtle vocalist adept at bringing a world-weary dignity to all kinds of material. It's a virtue once again to the fore on a new LP, his 11th, that encompasses – to pick just a few highlights – the New Order-acknowledging *Penthouse High*, late-era Leonard Cohen-style restraint on *Paper Hat* and the nouveau-psychedelia of *War Horse,* while still sounding cohesive and confident. A knock worth answering. *Jonathan Wright*

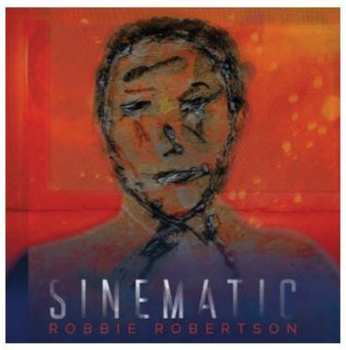
7

Neil Young/Crazy Horse
COLORADO
REPRISE

Neil Young fans, you'll have to keep the Champagne on ice, as his reunion with Crazy Horse after seven years (now with added Springsteen-acolyte Nils Lofgren) is not the unreserved success you were hoping for. Often sounding uninspired and flat, the meandering 13-minute *She Showed Me Love* is a case in point; it runs out of steam at the halfway point, but carries on regardless, repeating its title ad nauseum for another seven wearisome minutes. Meanwhile, *Eternity* is rather pretty but recycles the melody of *Till The Morning Comes* from *After The Goldrush*. *Help Me Lose My Mind* rages aimlessly, and it's only on gnarly album stand-out *Shut It Down* and the anti-Trump smackdown *Rainbow Of Colors,* when the fire in Young's belly about climate change is more clearly targeted, that Crazy Horse come into their own. ***Steve Harnell***

6

Robbie Robertson
SINEMATIC
UMC



Robbie Robertson's sixth solo album is informed by three projects, his 2016 autobiography *Testimony*, an upcoming Band documentary and another Scorsese collaboration, crime drama *The Irishman*. That filmic link powers opener *I Hear You Paint Houses*, Robertson reuniting with Van Morrison. While *Sinematic* is rather one-paced and dictated by traditional rhyme schemes, Robbie's flair for storytelling hits home more often than not. The gritty *Shanghai Blues* impresses, as does the swampy squall of *Dead End Kid*. Fans of The Band may find a lump in their throat listening to *Once Were Brothers*. Surely the lines "We already had it out, Between the north and south/ When we heard all the lies, Coming out of your mouth" must be reserved as his final comment on the long-held grudge drummer Levon Helm held against him. *Steve Harnell*

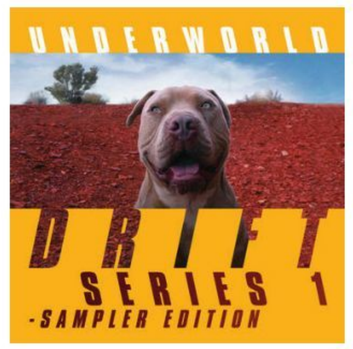
7

Nils Frahm
ALL ENCORES
ERASED TAPES

Conceived as a triple album covering distinct areas (acoustic, ambient and electronic), 2018's *All Melody* sometimes felt like a fractured attempt to defy 'New Classical' conventions. *All Encores* unites similar, extraneous material developed over three EPs, but achieves it with increased coherence. Volume 1's first four tracks, all solo piano, save *Ringing*'s muted trumpet, will suit Frahm's early adopters, his quiet melodicism best on *The Roughest Trade*, while *Harmonium In The Well* is an 11-minute showcase for the instrument. Volume 2's *Sweet Little Lie* suggests Harold Budd performing *Moonlight Sonata*, while *Talisman* recalls ambient master Loscil's *Endless Falls*, as does Volume 3's *Admirador*. But it's *Spells*' shimmering rhythms and *All Armed*'s dark grooves which will satisfy fans of Frahm's breakthrough live collection, *Spaces*. ***Wyndham Wallace***

8

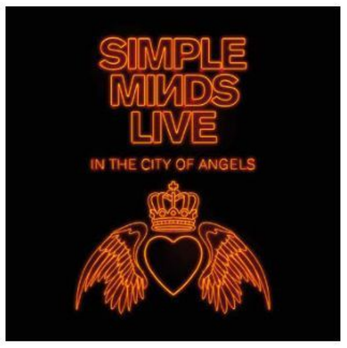
Underworld
DRIFT SERIES 1 – SAMPLER
SMITH HYDE PRODUCTIONS



For the past year, Underworld have made a new song, video or essay every week. The whole lot is available in a 7CD/DVD/book boxset. The vinyl edition is a 10-song sampler which is, give or take, a regular Underworld album. The songs are generally from their mellower side, with Rick Smith's vocals appropriately drifting in and out of songs like sci-fi closer *Custard Speedtalk*, though labelling it ambient is overlooking the intense 95-second assault of *Mile Bush Pride*. It's unlikely to have the impact of classic Underworld, but you can sense the duo's playful mood in being let off the leash, especially at what appears an excellently curated selection. A laudable experiment which makes for frequently hypnotic listening, it'll be fascinating to see what comes next now their creative muscle has been tested so vigorously. *John Earls*

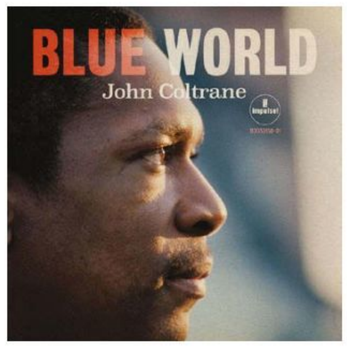
8

Simple Minds
LIVE IN THE CITY OF ANGELS
BMG



"Everybody," Jim Kerr demands, on taking the LA Orpheum Theatre's stage, "please, let me see your hands." Hoary rock gestures seem inevitable, but Kerr's enthusiasm is infectious and, furthermore, they then launch into a blistering *Waterfront*. Recorded last autumn, this 25-track collection is full of such moments, albeit both kinds (15 more tracks on the deluxe and download sets include an eccentric take on Prince's *The Cross*). A robust *Up On The Catwalk*, an emotional *Glittering Prize*, a gigantic *Theme For Great Cities*, a propulsive *New*… They're all present, and recent songs blend in too: a strapping take on 2018's *Walk Between Worlds*, 2005's dramatic *Dolphins*. Kerr's mood, however, best suits the *Don't You Forget About Me* era: a pounding *Alive And Kicking* and exhilarating *Sanctify Yourself* are the crowning glories. **8**
Wyndham Wallace

John Coltrane
BLUE WORLD
IMPULSE



In what was an unprecedented move at the time, when Coltrane was asked in 1964 to provide music for Québécois filmmaker Gilles Groulx's *Le Chat Dans Le Sac*, he took the classic Quartet members Jimmy Garrison, Elvin Jones and McCoy Tyner to Van Gelder Studios in New Jersey to re-record some of his most famous work. Ironically, just 10 minutes of 'Trane cuts were eventually used in the film, and while this is billed as an unreleased LP, fans will nonetheless be familiar with the essence of its contents. Three takes of *Village Blues* and two of *Naima* make up the bulk of the 37-minute running time; in their various guises, the hushed atmospherics of both tunes shine. Coltrane keeps his most aggressive playing reined in and Garrison gets his moment in the sun via the wriggling *Traneing In*. **7**
Steve Harnell

Cigarettes After Sex
CRY
PARTISAN

Greg Gonzalez took his sweet time with Cigarettes After Sex's exquisitely dreamy debut – a record that sold half a million copies – so it's a pleasant surprise to hear a follow-up only two years later. Recorded by moonlight in a Mallorcan mansion, the sonic footprint has changed little, with glacial guitar arpeggios bathed in reverb and Gonzalez' sleepy cooing vocal hanging over deliciously melancholic waltz-time examinations of love and sex. Fans of that first album will swoon immediately at *Don't Let Me Go,* and *Heavenly*'s chorus is exactly as its name suggests, gently devotional and underpinned by a guitar phrase that's pretty well edible. The whole thing feels like the soundtrack to a heart-rending black and white movie scene where doomed lovers kiss hopelessly in a lamplit deluge. **8**
Gary Walker

808 State
TRANSMISSION SUITE
808 STATE

The first album in 17 years from the pioneering electronic duo of Graham Massey and Andrew Barker is something of a love letter to Manchester's music scene, old and new. However, a hark back to the nostalgia-coated golden days of the Haçienda this is not. While rooted in some of the band's distinct squelchy acid-fried techno propulsions, this feels like music that has its eyes firmly on the horizon rather than looking over its shoulder. The tracks, which weave from industrial-tinged thumpers to more eclectic bass-driven beats, feel punchy and potent, with the duo moving with real purpose and flair across the album. Any record that celebrates Manchester's musical history has to feature 808 State pretty heavily, so it's more than apt that this outfit have managed to make a record that sounds like everything great about the city. **8**
Daniel Dylan Wray

WHAT'S ON IN THE SHOP
SISTER RAY
LONDON

Iggy Pop
FREE
CAROLINE/LOMA VISTA
This has had a lot of airtime in the shop. We did that chin-stroking thing of, "is it really any good? What is the old bugger up to now?" and "shall we play *The Idiot* instead?". The truth is it's Iggy and he can do this stuff and pull it off with aplomb. The man has more front than Blackpool.

Bat For Lashes
LOST GIRLS
AWAL
Natasha Khan upped sticks, left EMI and went to LA on a voyage of discovery, yawn. Doesn't every musician do that? People rarely go to Jaywick Sands or Whitley Bay to immerse themselves in a different kind of culture. In doing so, she's discovered a frivolity with the 80s at its core. Trevor Horn should have produced this, Anne Dudley on the strings and Zeus B Held could have done a remix or two. I'm a big fan.

Chrissie Hynde
VALVE BONE WOE
BMG
Meanwhile, someone from the 80s goes back further in time and does a covers album. Not only that, it's "in a jazz style". Surely this is Rod Stewart territory? Chrissie, what have you done?! Relax, she's nailed it. She's as smoky as a packet of Gauloises and even her cover of *Caroline, No* makes the grade.

65 Days Of Static
REPLICR, 2019
SUPERBALL MUSIC

After soundtracking the infinite universe of computer game *No Man's Sky* in 2016, 65 Days Of Static return with a record that is just as deeply rooted in atmosphere and world-building scope, but with a less exploratory nature and more of an ominous tone to it. Focusing in on the tumultuous times we live in, the album extracts the doom and gloom of current times via dense droning atmospheres, whirring sci-fi-tinged electronics, pulsing techno beats and an ambiance so engulfing it almost feels like wading through a post-apocalyptic wasteland. Yet amidst all this dark dread there exists a delicate beauty. All of which means that *replicr 69* is not an entirely alien or abrasive listen, instead it is a deeply cinematic record that plays out like a soundtrack – except it's not to a fictional universe but rather the impending decline of our own. **8**
Daniel Dylan Wray

Moon Duo
STARS ARE THE LIGHT
SACRED BONES

Sonic explorers Ripley Johnson and Sanae Yamada delve into more dance-curious territories on album seven and it's one of the duo's finest. Taking in 70s disco and 90s rave, with the production wizardry of Sonic Boom, it's a mesmerising journey. Opener *Flying*'s dubby tape echo and shuffling beats point the way, while the title track lands somewhere between The Beta Band and The Chemical Brothers' more blissful moments. *Fall (In Your Love)* finds them flirting with trip-hop before *Lost Heads* sees an arpeggiating synth pattern and guitar riff locked in a cyclical dance that extends past six minutes. Whenever vocals pierce the dream state, they're breathy and reverb-drenched, and only on *Eye 2 Eye*, which sounds not a million miles from *Extrmntr*-era Primal Scream, do fuzzed-up guitars enter the fray. *Gary Walker* **8**

Penguin Cafe
HANDFULS OF NIGHT
ERASED TAPES

Perhaps it shouldn't surprise anyone that a route out of the cul-de-sac into which so-called 'New Classical' has backed itself comes via the son of arguably one of such music's pioneers. Arthur Jeffes' father is Penguin Café Orchestra's Simon Jeffes, and though 2017's *The Imperfect Sea* maintained some of his forbearer's idiosyncrasies, *Handfuls Of Night* is a more sombre, cinematic affair. Developing its melodies more, and depending less on repetitive arpeggios, its echoes of the past – *Chapter*'s circular pizzicato riff, and *Pythagoras On The Line Again*'s languid, liquid riposte to his father's similarly titled 1993 work – are faint. Instead, *At The Top Of the Hill, They Stood...*'s melodica pours oil on rippling waves of piano and *Chinstrap*'s swooning string themes, while *Winter Sun* and *Midnight Sun* provide serene bookends. *Wyndham Wallace* **8**

Swim Deep
EMERALD CLASSICS
POP COMMITTEE/COOKING VINYL

With its uplifting choir, blissful synths and a vocal that somehow combines Neil Tennant and Mike Skinner, *To Feel Good* is a well-titled intro to this Birmingham quintet's third album. Though the choir returns for *Father I Pray*, lending its synthetic dream pop a wide-eyed optimism, and *0121 Desire* begins like Madonna's *Holiday*, confirming their earlier Ride fixation is history, both are too feyly dreamy to sustain the mood. *Sail Away, Say Goodbye* falls short of the A-ha anthem it wishes it were, partially because Austin Williams' voice is more pastel-coloured sensitivity than transcendent. Still, *Top Of The Pops* recalls the underrated Northern Picture Library's 90s indie-synths, and *Never Stop Pinching Myself* offers a stripped-back response to *Screamadelica*'s quieter raptures. *Wyndham Wallace* **6**

MY NEW ALBUM
ANGEL OLSEN

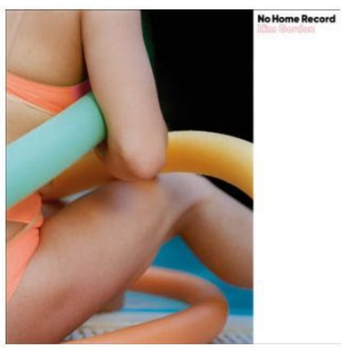
"In every way, from the making of it, to the words, to how I feel moving forward, this record is about owning up to your darkest side, finding the capacity for new love and trusting change." Angel Olsen admits to reinventing for her fourth full-length, initially intended to be a pair of releases – one solo and one with her full band. That was until the involvement of John Congleton, Jherek Bischoff, Ben Babbitt and a 14-piece orchestra, when she realised she "needed to separate these two records and release *All Mirrors* in its heaviest form."

Angel Olsen
ALL MIRRORS
JAGJAGUWAR

The slightly indie-rock bent to some of Olsen's earlier work has all but vanished on her latest release. Instead, *All Mirrors* concerns itself with sweeping strings-based arrangements and rich orchestrations that sit alongside some of her most tender and introspective work to date. Initially envisioned as a dual album that would be split between solo and full band, Olsen decided to embrace the fuller sound that was coming to form via the latter and it was a wise choice. The album is brimming with texture and thoughtful arrangements, be they the more baroque pop leanings or some of the more electronic and synth-drenched moments. Managing to make both your most expansive and most intimate record in one go is clearly no easy feat, but Olsen has skilfully managed to do just that. **8**
Daniel Dylan Wray

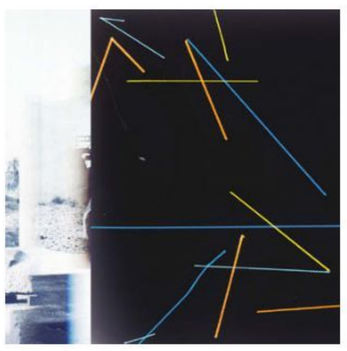
CAMERON McCOOL

Kim Gordon
NO HOME RECORD
MATADOR



Kim Gordon started playing music in the early 1980s and so her first solo album has been a long time coming. On this evidence, the Sonic Youth founder has taken going alone in her stride and, impressively, her debut disc is certainly not lacking in experimental bite. Throughout *No Home Record*, Gordon's wiry, distinctive contralto shapes and dominates proceedings over unsettling squalls of discordant beats and guitars. From the opening salvo of the visceral *Sketch Artist*, via the agitated art-rock of *Air BnB* and *Hungry Baby*, all the way through to the spooky closer *Get Yr Life Back*, there is scant flirtation with anything closely resembling a familiar song structure. She may no longer be the girl in a band, but Gordon is still pushing the boundaries. A limited edition white vinyl edition lies in wait on pre-order, as well as one of those cassette thingys. ***Gary Tipp*** **8**

Portico Quartet
MEMORY STREAMS
GONDWANA RECORDS



Portico Quartet return with *Memory Streams*, their fifth studio album and one that continues the journey that started with 2007's Mercury-nominated debut *Knee Deep In The North Sea*. While haunting sounds of steelpan are less dominant than before, they still enhance the intermittently frantic *Signals In The Dusk*, and hypnotise amid *Immediately Visible*'s contrapuntal rhythms. Blankets of electronic effects provide *Gradient* with its comforting warmth and ensure their jazz remains refreshing. Jack Wylie's saxophone continues to dazzle, with its mellifluous qualities expanding *Ways Of Seeing*'s luxurious ambience. *Memory Palace*'s piano minimalism offers a midway respite, but as an outfit they are at their most thrilling when the spotlight is given over to drummer Duncan Bellamy. *Wyndham Wallace* **8**

Patrick Watson
WAVE
DOMINO

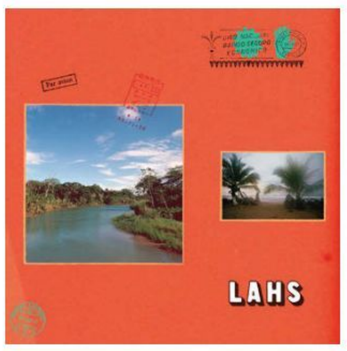
LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Patrick Watson has spent the years since 2015's superlative *Love Songs For Robots* drowning in bad news, including the loss of his mother and his relationship. Melancholy's always suited him, however. *Wave* is awash in images of a life submerged. Yet it tracks a path to safety, from when, on the title track, the surge "came and washed away all the ground I was standing on" to its closing track, *Here Comes The River*, by when – poetically, triumphantly – "children were swimming from the top of the trees". But if *Dream For Dreaming* sounds like Radiohead's *Creep* merged with 10cc's *I'm Not In Love*, Watson's self-reflection is more constructive. *Melody Noir*'s lush, uplifting soundscape mixes gently strummed Spanish guitars and French chanson, while the muted beauty of *Look At You* reflects his awakening optimism. This *Wave*'s a magic wand. ***Wyndham Wallace*** **9**

Battles
JUICE B CRYPTS
WARP

Returning with their fourth album, now as a duo, the experimental New York outfit are joined by a wealth of guests, such as Liquid Liquid's Sal Principato, tUnE-yArDs and Shabazz Palaces. The album does what the band have always done so well, merging restless, itchy twisted rhythms and sputtering electronics with a sense of forward propulsion and a unique sense of flow. The guest vocalists switch up the tone, with Sal Principato's turn on *Titanium 2 Step* perhaps the most successful, sounding like some lost A Certain Ratio record dug up and given the James Murphy treatment. The electronic hip-hop of the Shabazz Palaces-featuring track *IZM* also propels the band into pleasing new territory, proving that even when operating within the very distinct Battles sonic framework the band are still finding new places to explore. *Daniel Dylan Wray* **7**

Allah-Las
LAHS
MEXICAN SUMMER



Allah-Las are now a world away from their self-titled 2012 debut album. Theming *LAHS* around the sun-splashed lands they've visited on their travels, each track acts as a postcard, stamped and signed with mellow surf-rock riffs. But while songs such as *Polar Onion* and *Houston* are merely a stone's throw from their established garage-rock catalogue, the band have worked hard to bring new flavours to this their fifth album. Leaning a little harder on psychedelia this time around, *Holding Pattern* and *Roco Ono* spin out into twisting, echoey tangents; in some places, trademark hazy Californian vocals are switched for Spanish or Portuguese. Though *LAHS* should be praised for wearing its international influences on its sleeve, tracks such as *Royal Blues* are a swing and a miss, subtracting from the otherwise easy-going beach vibes. ***Tilda Howard*** **7**

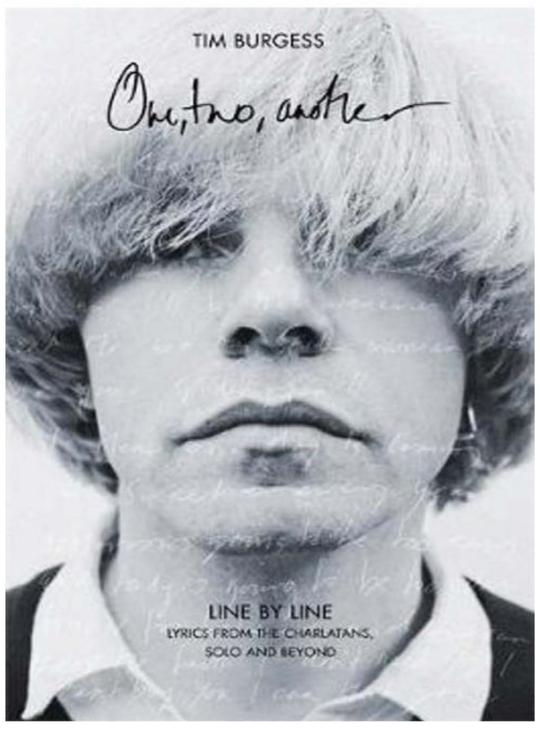
Tegan & Sara
HEY, I'M JUST LIKE YOU
WARNER

Though *Hey, I'm Just Like You* appears to be a reaction to the Canadians' recent forays into pop, it's, in fact, inspired by cassettes containing songs written in their mid-teens. With lyrics and structures merely tweaked, they call it "the record we never could have made as teenagers, full of songs we never could have written as adults." So expect a dozen cute songs recorded with a budget instead of a cassette recorder. Lead single *I'll Be Back Someday* suggests a love of Veruca Salt, *Please Help Me* hints at Edie Brickell, and *I Know I'm Not The Only One* sounds like a muscular Juliana Hatfield. *But Hold My Breath Until I Die*'s chugging guitars can't disguise its derivative nature, and *We Don't Have Fun When We're Together Anymore*'s bombastic synths could almost be a transatlantic Spice Girls. *Wyndham Wallace* **6**

One Two Another

TIM BURGESS

LITTLE, BROWN £20



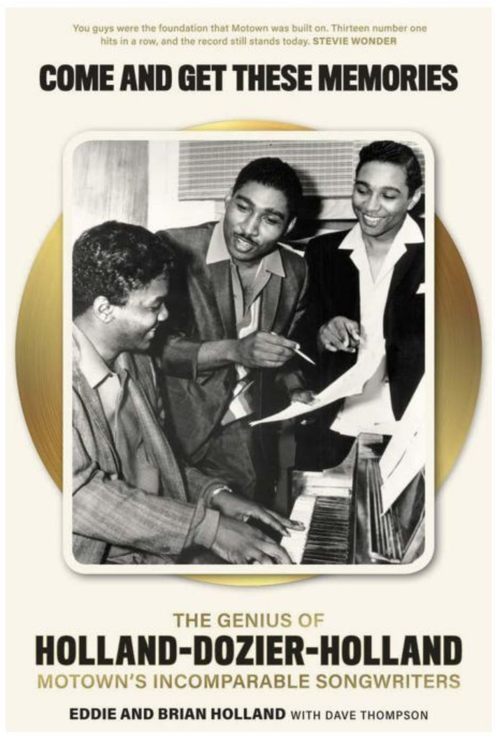
If song lyrics really are the new poetry, as the recent proliferation of lyric anthologies might suggest, then everyone's favourite bowl-cut Charlatan has just submitted his welcome application to become our next poet laureate. Not just a round-up of collected lyrics from his band and solo days, *One Two Another* also comes complete with insightful annotations and, best of all, Burgess' own idiosyncratic musings on the songwriting process itself. As Tim writes about the elusive art of putting words to tunes: "That's the thing. I imagine almost everybody writes songs in different ways, but then again, each person may use all the different ways to come up with the lyrics to a song. From lists to experiences and stories, there are no rules. A good song is a good song whoever writes it and however the writing happens. I only know what I do." While not instantly recognised for his prowess as a wordsmith during the height of Britpop, a retrospective gander reveals a lot more craft than first imagined. *Gary Tipp*

7

Come And Get These Memories

EDDIE AND BRIAN HOLLAND

OMNIBUS PRESS £25



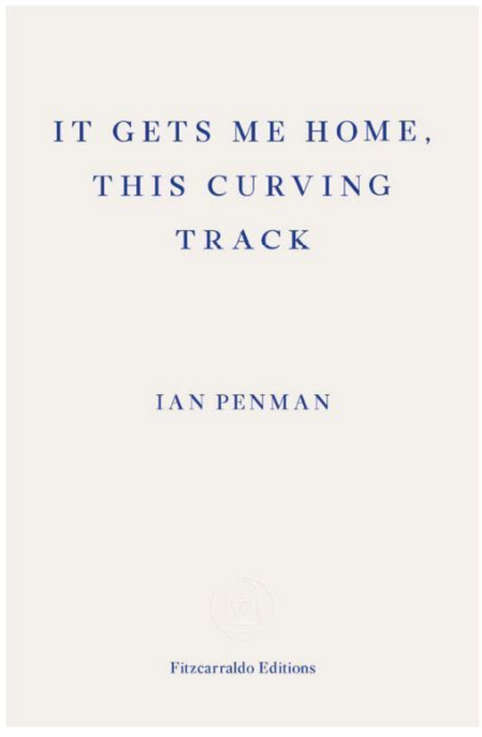
In 1964, the songwriting credit Holland-Dozier-Holland appeared on the record label in brackets under the title of such long-lasting and memorable hits as *Where Did Our Love Go*, *Baby Love*, *Nowhere To Run* and *Baby I Need Your Loving*. And that was only a tiny selection of the hits that the three of them wrote during their tenure at Motown Records. Now, for the first time, two parts of the trio – brothers Eddie and Brian Holland – finally spill the beans on the inside story of the Motor City hit factory. The other member of the trio, Lamont Dozier, wasn't involved in the oral history aspect of this book, but is fondly recounted. Former Rolling Stones manager Andrew Loog Oldham believed that HDH were much more than just the sound of young America. "If Chicago was the consciousness of the US in the 60s, Motown was its hope, and HDH were the front line. They were America's Lennon & McCartney." And this slice of pop-music history shares an insight into what it was like to really be there. *GT*

7

It Gets Me Home, This Curving Track

IAN PENMAN

FITZCARRALDO EDITIONS £20



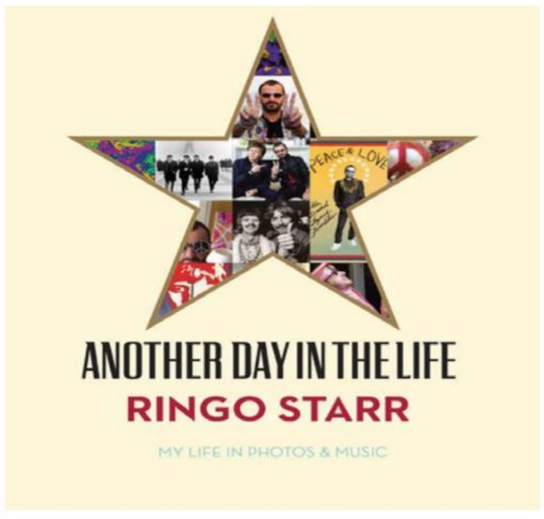
There are some music journalists for whom the concept of 'word count' is a cruel, limiting factor. Ian Penman is one of them. In his first book for 20 years, across eight long-form essays, the former *NME* writer reminds us all why the epithet 'legendary' is so regularly placed in front of his name. Covering mods, James Brown, Charlie Parker, Frank Spencer, Elvis Presley, John Fahey, Steely Dan and Prince, Penman's exciting, evocative prose is given extended rein to explore and culturally terrorise his subjects. This is a deep dive and Penman's unapologetically intellectual approach means this is not a book for everyone, but those who appreciate uncommon ideas and the use of language as an art form should jump on in without caution. The title "it gets me home, this curving track" is borrowed from a WH Auden poem, *Walks*, which, as Penman notes in his introduction, "is a lovely description of spinning vinyl, and also words that might have sprung from any number of unkempt and long-favoured songs". *GT*

8

Another Day In The Life

RINGO STARR

GENESIS PUBLICATIONS £30



Some say that the pro-Brexit LA resident may be advised to keep his not inconsiderable hooter out of UK politics and stick to what he does best. But there's the rub: what is that exactly? Well, one long-term passion that has made its way into print is Ringo's penchant for photography, as he states in this nicely put-together coffee-table tome: "I am a photographer as well as a musician. I love taking photos of random things, and seeing how they all relate." And that he most surely does with *Another Day In The Life,* a relentlessly snap-happy affair containing over 500 photographs, as Ringo seemingly points and clicks at anything and everything that appears in his viewfinder. As expected, his musician mates are here, with Macca, Joe Walsh, Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page and Paul Weller all captured in a slew of rock star selfies. Not only that, but there are images of dogs' noses, training shoes, the Chelsea Flower Show and clouds, lots of clouds. There's also the briefest of forewords by filmmaker David Lynch, who breaks away from the dark existential madness of his movies to say, "Hip Hip Hooray for Ringo and this beautiful picture book of Peace, Love and Happiness." Indeed. ***GT***

6

DREAM MACHINES

Origin Live

VOYAGER TURNTABLE

£17,000 (EXCLUDING TONEARM) originlive.com

The Voyager deck is the culmination of over 25 years' experience in turntable design

Origin Live's top-of-the-range turntable is a beast and a half. You will notice that the Voyager has many seemingly insignificant details. For example, lightening hole profiles and part shapes are all carefully derived from experience of structural analysis, vital for the correct management of micro-vibrations. This is not the brute force approach. Another example? The Voyager uses a multi-part platter designed to transmit energy at all frequencies without the reflection problems encountered in many platter designs. You're looking at over 25 years of development.

1 BEAR WITH US
The bearing in the standard Voyager has been developed over two decades to yield extremely low levels of friction and vibration.

2 SET THE TONE
Up to three 9" to 12" tonearms can be mounted at the same time. Arm boards are easily changed and adjusted to make a deck that is customisable and can be personalised to your needs.

3 TORQUE TORQUE
Two high-torque, low-cogging DC motors are supplied by a leading Swiss manufacturer.

2
1
ORIGIN LIVE
VOYAGER-S TURNTABLE
3

The NAD C588 is impressive in terms of both build quality and overall performance

NAD C588

TURNTABLE

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

£699 nadelectronics.com enquiries@ssav.com

Paul Rigby is wildly surprised by the sound quality of this carefully constructed turntable

There are a few points you could throw in NAD's direction. The first is that the company really do need to begin to provide their turntables with actual names. I recently reviewed the C558 for *LLV*. This is the C588. I wonder, did you have to look twice there? Confusion beckons.

Secondly, you could accuse NAD of creating 'Lego' turntables. Turntables built from a bag of bits. Pro-Ject bits, to be exact. That would be unfair, though. Yes, NAD does fly in parts from Pro-Ject, builds them and then slaps a NAD badge on the plinth, but there's more to NAD's strategies than that simplified chain of events.

Firstly, you can't blame NAD for doing this sort of thing. If I was the company's boss, that's what I'd recommend, as NAD is not just a turntable company. To invest millions in specialist staff and infrastructure to research, design, build and sell a couple of turntable models is a recipe for bankruptcy. So, actually, the NAD way is the correct way in terms of economic survival.

Secondly, the Pro-Ject-inspired turntables that it badges and sells might be based upon Pro-Ject's warehouse roster, but the final turntables are unique. The 588 is no exception. You won't see the 588 anywhere else in the world. Even in Pro-Ject's demo room. The combo of parts called the C588 is essentially NAD. And only NAD.

Thirdly, there is a solid reason why the C558 and the C588 are monickered in such a similar way. Let's find out why.

The dust cover will protect fragile parts from the sticky fingers of young children

The C588 is a two-speed, belt-driven manual turntable, based on an electronic, synchronous speed control. That latter point is intriguing because Gold Note does the same on its more expensive Valore 425 turntables. That is, AC power is drawn into the turntable, it's then converted to DC and then back to AC to reduce high-frequency detail-veiling noise.

Even the belt has been tweaked. A synthetic rubber belt with "specified characteristics", it's included to isolate motor vibration. A neat little detail, which says a lot about the tone of this turntable design.

A glass platter (a horrible, ringing thing it is, too) saves cash on the overall build budget. That is damped by a felt mat (as Rega does with its Planar 3). The MDF plinth is meaty and reassuring, while a dust cover is included.

The main difference between the C558 and the C588 is the arm, the core feature of the C588. That's where the money has been spent. And that is a great decision. The tonearm has, for too long, been under-estimated in terms of turntable design. It's always been important, yes, but not often prioritised. NAD has made the arm the star here. That's the reason you're being asked to spend more for this C588 as opposed to the C558. The tonearm is based on a 9" carbon fibre-covered tube. Off the end of that is an Ortofon 2M Red. The latter is a good, solid cartridge with an elliptical stylus tip priced, on its own, at around £90.

I used a blend of Mike Oldfield and Nancy Sinatra LPs during sound tests and found a welcome tonal balance, which was based on a strong, but never bloated, bass performance. You can point at the plinth and arm for that, which vindicates the design. What's more, unlike some of the competition, it doesn't appear to be compromised. That is, it's not about doing one or two things well, leaving the rest to wallow in a pool of the average. Allied to the above was a low noise presentation, which aids midrange clarity and treble fragility, with plenty of air around the upper-mids to extend the dynamic range.

Superbly designed, the NAD C588 is a real surprise in terms of build quality and overall performance. I somewhat unfairly expected a turntable-by-numbers approach, but was faced with a carefully constructed turntable offering a sound quality that is quite delightful, neutral and balanced in terms of sonics. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the NAD C588 to anyone looking to buy a budget turntable.

I WOULDN'T HESITATE TO RECOMMEND THE NAD C588 TO ANYONE LOOKING TO BUY A BUDGET TURNTABLE

9

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
CLARITY	THE PLATTER
BUILD QUALITY	
TONEARM	
TONAL BALANCE	

The NADC588 punches above its weight and price point in its default configuration

Speaker design is becoming a whole lot more interesting in terms of shape and technology – and the Eclipse TD508 MK3 is leading the way

Eclipse TD508 MK3

LOUDSPEAKERS

£960 PER PAIR eclipse-td.com

These unique egg-shaped speakers provide an explicit and coherent sound for **John Pickford**

Eclipse loudspeakers are different from the norm. Their egg-shaped design is striking, as the vast majority of speakers still employ the traditional rectangular box enclosure, be it in floorstanding or standmount (bookshelf) configuration. This is no gimmick, though, as the rounded contours effectively control internal standing waves, a common plight of boxes with parallel surfaces.

The TD508 MK3 on test here is one of the smaller models in the company's range, ideally suited to desktop placement, although dedicated tall stands are available on which to mount them. Convenient positioning is aided by an angle adjustment function, which allows the enclosure to be tilted should they be placed lower or higher than the ideal listening position, with the driver at ear level. You will notice I say driver in the singular, as Eclipse speakers eschew the multi-driver approach of mating one or more mid/bass woofers with a high-frequency tweeter. Full-range driver systems are rare and tricky to implement, yet successful designs have several advantages over multi-driver boxes. With no electronic crossover to mate woofer to tweeter, a purer signal path is enabled with less distortion. Also, the single driver performs as a point source, offering a coherent presentation with none of the phase issues that can plague more conventional designs.

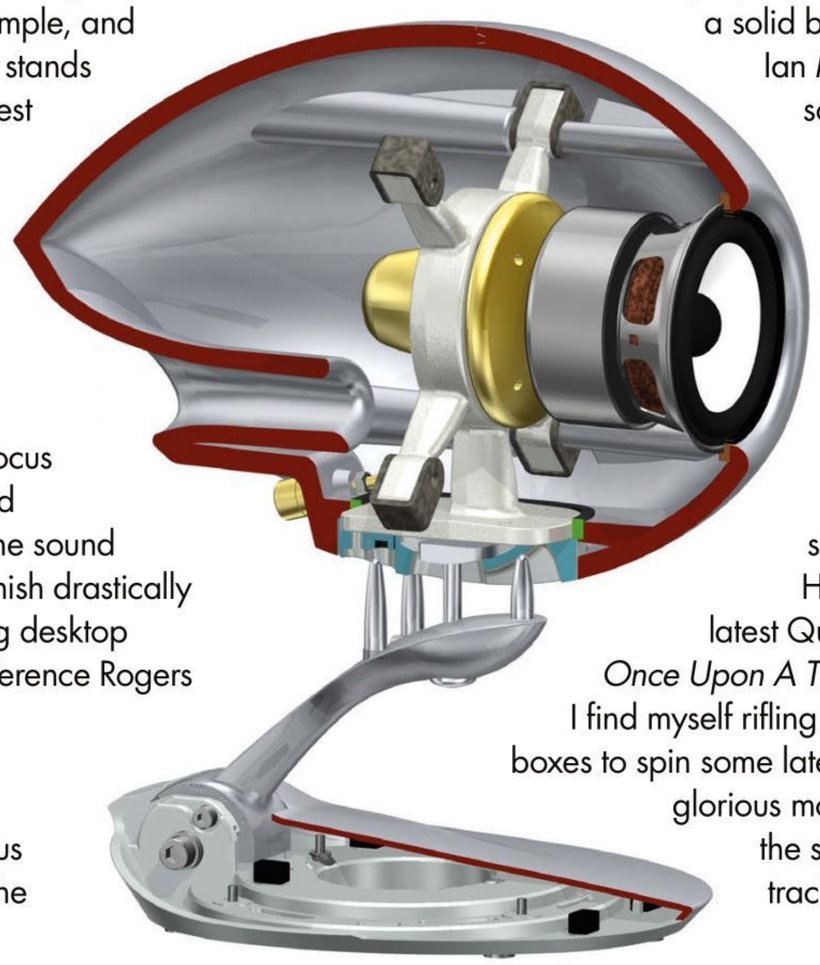
The TD508 is not a brand new product to market, however now in MK3 form, it has been optimised to bring out the best from the design. Eclipse state one clear goal in their approach to sound reproduction, and that's accuracy. This is achieved by striving for the ultimate in accurate impulse response. Unlike frequency response measurements, impulse response measurements reveal information regarding the speaker's ability to time and remain phase coherent, as well as the bandwidth and smoothness of the frequency range.

Talking of which, the quoted frequency response of the TD508 is 52Hz-27kHz, however this is the -10dB figure, so the more common -3dB margin will likely see these figures rounded off, as initial listening confirms. Although the speaker doesn't sound unduly lean, dyed-in-the-wool bass heads will find the low-end lacking the bottom octave. Sensitivity is on the low side (82dB), so a reasonably powerful amplifier is needed; I would suggest 40 watts minimum.

THE SINGLE DRIVER PERFORMS AS A POINT SOURCE, OFFERING A COHERENT PRESENTATION

The distinctive egg shape not only looks stunning, it also helps to improve the sound

As the TD508s are small and light, I tried them both on a pair of heavy, concrete-filled stands and placed on my office desk. My desk is not an ideal 'stand' for loudspeakers, yet the adjustable integrated stand fitted to the speaker is well damped, rigid and effective at isolating the driver and enclosure from unwanted vibrations. Easy portability makes A/B comparisons simple, and while my dedicated stands bring out the very best from the speakers, the sound remains almost the same atop my desk. Reflections from the desktop rob the speakers of a little focus in terms of detail and imaging, however the sound quality doesn't diminish drastically as it does attempting desktop placement of my reference Rogers LS3/5a monitors.



Playing an old favourite from my teens, the eponymous debut album from The Icicle Works (1984), I hear an extremely precise rendition of the music. This is a densely produced, synth-heavy, guitar-pop album with a lot of pounding, tribal drumming courtesy of Chris Sharrock (currently tub thumping for Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds). Some systems struggle with this record, yet the TD508s revel in the propulsive rhythms, providing a solid bedrock for frontman Ian McNabb's rich, soaring vocals and jangly guitars. Reproducing the album's melodic bass guitar parts, the speakers dig deep enough and reveal details such as the chorus effect evident on some tracks.

Having enjoyed the latest Quentin Tarantino film, *Once Upon A Time In Hollywood*, I find myself rifling through my 45s boxes to spin some late-60s pop, all in glorious mono, as featured on the soundtrack. Groovy tracks from The Mamas And The Papas, Simon & Garfunkel and Paul Revere & The Raiders are bags of fun played through these little speakers, getting toes tapping effortlessly. José Feliciano's cover version of *California Dreamin'* (1968), a superb solo guitar and voice recording, displays the speakers' coherence and realism and once again I am struck by their excellent musical timing. Trip-hammer transients tend to dominate with some tracks, however, sometimes to the point of distraction, pushing percussion to the fore. The upside is the TD508s never sound dull or sluggish.

The MK3 edition of the Eclipse TD508 is a solid choice for anyone wishing to fill a small room with crisp, quality sound.

8

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
EXPLICIT YET COHERENT SOUND	PREDOMINANT TRANSIENTS
ACCURATE TIMING AND TIMBRE	INEFFICIENT – GUTSY AMPLIFIER REQUIRED
EASE OF PLACEMENT	
ADJUSTABILITY	
STYLISH LOOKS	

The Clearway speaker cable offers smooth, musical detail at a nice price

Chord Company
C-SERIES AND CLEARWAY CABLES

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

C-LINE RCA £40 (0.5M) C-SCREEN SPEAKER £5 (P/M) CLEARWAY RCA £90 (0.5M) CLEARWAY SPEAKER £10 (P/M) chord.co.uk

The Chord Company's cables can make a real difference to your setup, as **John Pickford** finds

Nothing provokes debate among audiophiles more than the importance of good cables. Although some maintain all cables sound the same, it's acknowledged a well-manufactured cable will produce better results than cheaply made cables supplied with budget hardware.

Chord Company has been manufacturing audio cables for over 30 years, with a range that begins with affordable products designed to bring out the best in budget systems and ends with keenly priced reference designs to suit high-end kit.

On test here are two sets of cables from the budget end of Chord's range, comprising a set of RCA interconnects and three-metre lengths of speaker cable from the entry-level C-series and next-level Clearway ranges. All Chord cables employ various levels of the company's exclusive ARAY technology, a mechanically tunable design used within the cable construction process.

The C-line RCA interconnects are constructed with oxygen-free copper multi-stranded conductors, as are the Clearways, which boast heavier-gauge wire and silver-plated connectors. Both sets of speaker cable feature silver-plated connectors, with the Clearway incorporating FEP insulation and conductors arranged in twisted pair configuration.

Inspecting both sets of cables, it's clear Chord do not skimp on build quality with their budget cables. While the company's more expensive cables use higher-grade components, the quality of construction remains constant throughout the ranges.

Both the C-series and Clearway cables are connected, in turn, to my office system, which uses Monster interconnects that would have been fairly inexpensive when purchased around 25 years ago, along with similarly affordable Audioquest solid-core speaker cable of the same vintage.

For the purpose of this test, I also compare the Chord cables with a set of freebie interconnects, those thin black wires with red and white plastic connectors, and some cheap no-name speaker wire.

Swapping out my regular budget cables for the basic, low-grade wire degrades the sound quality significantly. I suffer this poor sound long enough to play a few test tracks before cabling up with the C-series. Suddenly, music rather than mush is produced, showing clearly the importance of decent cabling. Upgrading to the Clearway cables brings about a noticeable improvement in musicality and transparency. Now the music flows effortlessly with an open, involving presentation, along with detail and dynamic range that easily betters my old cables. Smooth rather than stark, the Clearway is well suited to systems that may be on the bright or edgy side.

The C-series cables are a sound choice for those on a budget, however spending double the price for the Clearway cables will give a level of performance that will enhance a system comprising components around the £1,000 mark.

9

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
BRIGHT, LIVELY PRESENTATION (C-SERIES)	SLIGHTLY OPAQUE BASS (C-SERIES)
SMOOTH AND MUSICAL (CLEARWAY)	
OPEN, INVOLVING SOUND	
CONSTRUCTION QUALITY	
VALUE FOR MONEY	

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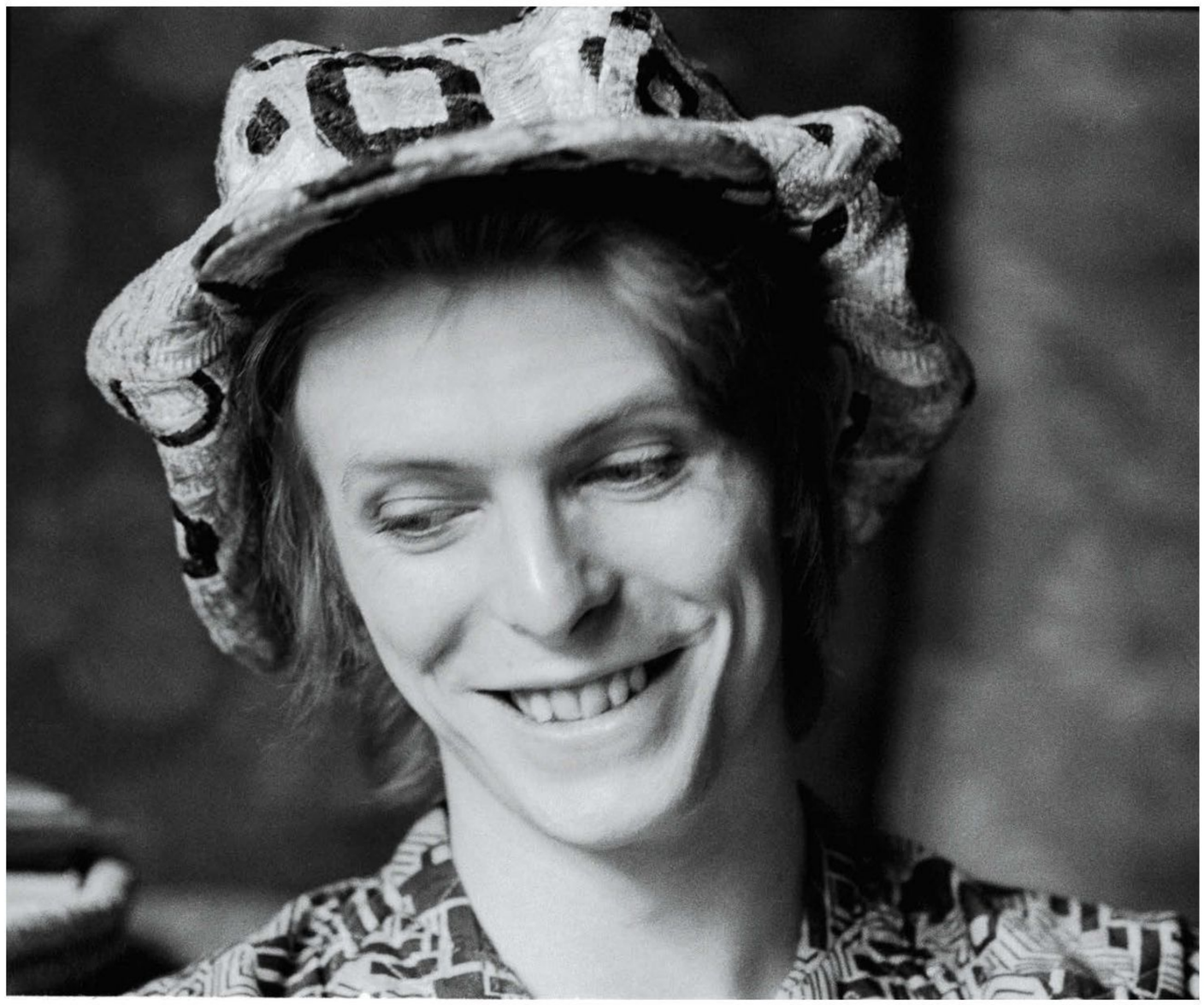
CLOSER

VINYL'S GREATEST FINAL TRACKS

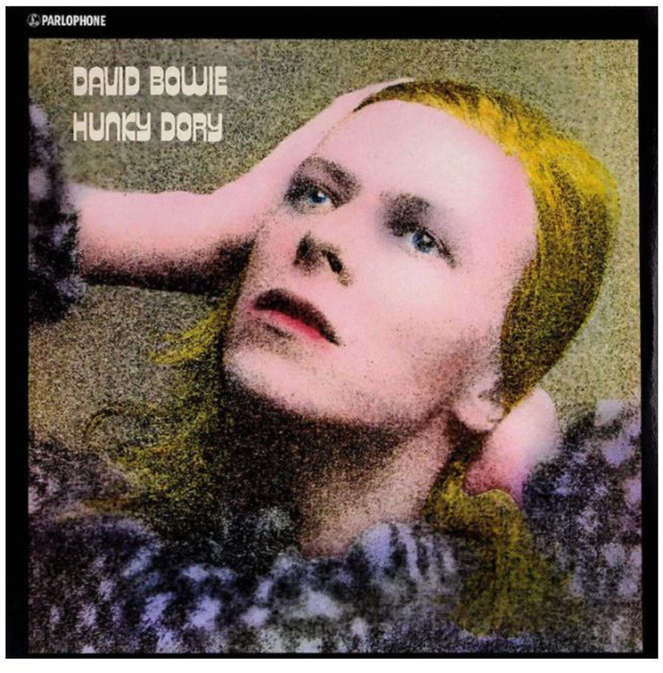
#6 DAVID BOWIE
THE BEWLAY BROTHERS



Hunky Dory's oblique closing cut is wide open to interpretation. **Gary Tipp** might just slip away…

Sandwiched between the heavy metal prog-folk of *The Man Who Sold The World* and the glamtastic *Ziggy Stardust…*, *Hunky Dory* witnessed a pre-superstar David Bowie fine-honing his songwriting skills. Made up of an inspired hotchpotch of influences worn squarely on his frilly sleeve, the album was recorded at Trident Studios in the summer of 1971 and is still cherished by The Dame's vast legion of fans.

Amid the dodgy Dylan tributes (*Song For Bob Dylan)*, Velvet Underground pastiches (*Queen Bitch*) and meta-superior sixth form poetry of *Life On Mars?*, closing cut *The Bewlay Brothers* is a strong contender for the most enigmatic, impenetrable song that Bowie ever committed to vinyl.



The only track written entirely in the studio during those sessions, it contains a stream of consciousness lyric that lends itself to interpretation when perhaps there really is none. During his career, Bowie performed the ballad on only a handful of occasions and hardly even commented on it.

What we do know is that Bewlay was the name of an English pipe manufacturer known to Bowie. In 2008, he reflected: "The only pipe I have ever smoked was a cheap Bewlay. It was a common item in the late 60s and for this song I used Bewlay as a cognomen, in place of my own. This wasn't just a song about brotherhood, so I didn't want to misrepresent it by using my true name.

"Having said that, I wouldn't know how to interpret the lyric of this song other than suggesting that there are layers of ghosts within it. It's a palimpsest, then."

Beyond impressing us with his fancy vocabulary, Bowie is clearly referring to his relationship with his psychotic half-brother, Terry Burns, whose schizophrenia led him to suicide in 1986 ("And my brother lays upon the rocks/ He could be dead, he could be not, he could be you/ He's chameleon, comedian, Corinthian and caricature").

A recurring theme throughout his early work (for example, *All The Madmen* on *TMWSTW*), Bowie was preoccupied with mental illness and his very real fear of succumbing to it.

As he told his wife Angie (Barnett) on the very first day they met: "Paranoid schizophrenia runs in my family, on my mother's side. Sometimes when I'm drunk or stoned, I can almost feel it in me." Not exactly the typical stuff of first dates.

STARVING FOR ME GRAVY

With its strange collection of disparate images, others have different interpretations of the song, with some believing it to hold a homo-erotic agenda.

Bowie was initially dismissive of the track, calling it a song for the US market, telling producer Ken Scott that Americans enjoy looking for clues in lyrics so he had written something to put them to work. Whatever the truth of the riddle-wrapped, enigmatic *The Bewlay Brothers,* there's no doubting it's one of the great closing tracks. ●

"The only pipe I have ever smoked was a cheap Bewlay"

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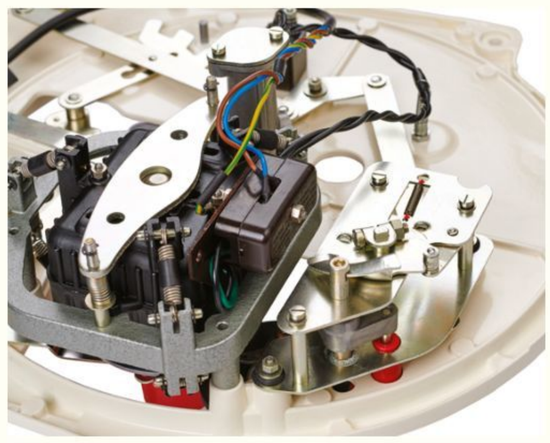

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